

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

# Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

# **About Google Book Search**

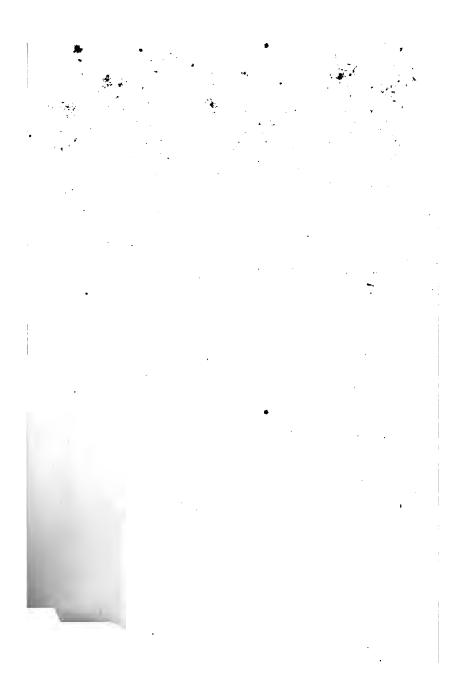
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

# Meditations on Genesis

KLIZABETH HARCOURT MITCHELL







# MEDITATIONS ON GENESIS

BY

# ELIZABETH HARCOURT MITCHELL

AUTHOR OF

'THE BEAUTIFUL FACE' GOLDEN HORSESHOES
GRAINS OF WHEAT' ETC.

LONDON
CHURCH EXTENSION ASSOCIATION
6 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1885

1409.f.9



LONDON: PRINTED BY

SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE

AND PARLIAMENT STREET

то

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR .  $\label{eq:AND} \mbox{\begin{tabular}{ll} AND\\ \hline \end{tabular}} \mbox{\begin{tabular}{ll} THE SISTERS OF THE CHURCH\\ \hline \end{tabular}}$ 

These Meditations

UNDERTAKEN AT THEIR REQUEST

ARE

Affectionately Dedicated

. • . . .

# CONTENTS.

								1	AGE
CREATION .	•	•	•	•					I
LIGHT .	•					•			3
GROWTH .					•				5
THE IMAGE O	F God								7
THE FALL.									9
SHAME .									II
THE SENTENC	CE.								13
THE FIRST D	EATH								15
THE WALK W	vith (	ao			•	•			17
THE DEPRAVI	TY OF	MA	N.						19
THE BUILDIN	G OF 1	THE	Ark						20
THE SHUT D	OOR								22
THE DOVE .									24
THE SACRIFIC	CE.								26
THE BLESSING	G.								28
THE COVENAL	NT.								30
THE TOWER	AND T	не С	CITY						32
THE CONFUSI	ON OF	Ton	IGUES						31
ABRAM'S ALTA	AR.								35
ABRAM'S DEC	EIT								38
THE NEW BE	GINNI	1G							40
WEALTH AND	STRIE	E							42
LOT'S CHOICE									44

						P	AGE
Abram's Portion	•	•	•	. •	•		46
THE BATTLE WITH THE KIN	GS.	•	•	•	٠	•	48
MELCHIZEDEK'S BLESSING .	•	•	•	•	•	•	50
THE FAITH OF ABRAM .	•	•		•	•	•	52
THE COVENANT WITH ABRAI	Mr.						54
IMPATIENCE FOR BLESSINGS		•					56
THE COVENANT WITH ABRA	M.						58
ABRAHAM'S HOSPITALITY .		•					60
ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION .							62
Lot's Warning							64
LOOKING BACK							66
THE DREAM OF ABIMELECH						•	69
THE PROMISE FULFILLED .							71
HAGAR							73
Abraham's Sacrifice .							75
ISAAC AND REBEKAH							77
Esau's Birthright							79
ISAAC'S SOWING AND REAPIN	iG .						81
THE THREE WELLS							83
THE RECONCILIATION							85
THE Two BLESSINGS							87
THE HATRED OF ESAU .							89
JACOB'S LADDER							91
BETHEL							93
THE SHEEP AND THE WELL							95
LEAH AND RACHEL							97
THE CHILDREN OF JACOB .							99
THE RICHES OF JACOB .							101
MIZPAH							103
JACOB'S RETURN							104
Peniel							106
THE HONOURS OF JACOB .							108
RENEWAL				_			110

CC	ONT.	ENT	s.	•			vií
							PAGE
THE HOUSE OF GOD .				•			. 111
THE SORROW OF JACOB	•	•	•	•	•		. 113
THE DEATH OF ISAAC							. 115
THE SEPARATION OF ESAU	JAN	D JAC	COB	•		•	. 117
THE ENVY OF JOSEPH'S B	RETH	REN		•	•	•	. 119
Joseph's Dreams .	•					•	. I2I
Joseph's Search for his	Bre	THRE	N				. 123
REUBEN'S HALF-HEARTED	I ESS						. 125
Joseph in the Pit .							. 127
THE SELLING OF JOSEPH							. 128
THE SORROW OF JACOB							. 130
JOSEPH AMONGST STRANGE	ZRS						. 132
Joseph Tempted .							. 134
JOSEPH FALSELY ACCUSED	•						. 135
Joseph in Prison .							. 137
Joseph as Interpreter							. 138
Joseph Forgotten .							. 140
JOSEPH AT COURT .							. 142
JOSEPH AS COUNSELLOR							. 143
JOSEPH'S ADVICE .							. 145
CORN IN EGYPT							. 147
THE DISCIPLINE OF THE	Har	DENE	D So	UL			. 149
THE SUFFERING OF THE	WAIT	TING	Soul				. 151
THE REMORSE OF THE A	WAKI	ENING	Sou	L			. 153
Working in the Dark							. 155
THE RESIGNATION OF THE	E So	RROW	FUL	Soul			. 157
THE BROTHER'S YEARNIN	G						. 159
JOSEPH'S FEAST							. 161
Joseph's Cup							. 163
Judah's Offer							. 164
THE RECONCILIATION							. 166
THE KING'S GIFTS .							. 168
ISRAEL'S SACRIFICE .							. 170
							•

			٠
v	1	1	1

# CONTENTS.

					PAGE
Seventy	•	•	•		. 172
THE MEETING OF JACOB AND	Jose	PH		•	. 173
REDEMPTION				٠.	. 175
JACOB'S LAST LONGING .				•	. 177
UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS .					. 179
Joseph's Filial Reverence		,			. 181
EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH .					. 182
THE BLESSING OF THE BRETH	REN				. 184
THE BLESSING OF JUDAH .					. 186
THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH					. 188
THE BODY OF JOSEPH .					. 190

# MEDITATIONS ON GENESIS.

# Greation.

First Prelude. Picture: Chaos; a streak of light in the distance.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, grant me grace that my understanding may be enlightened, and my will moved, in order that this meditation may be profitable to Thy glory and the particular needs of my soul.

### CONSIDERATION.

The earth was without form and void. We do not know whether it was once beautiful, and had been afterwards shattered and ruined, but this opinion is warranted by the Hebrew text. A mass of confusion, darkness, and ruin. Nothing for the eye to rest upon. Nothing to give any hope or comfort. An inert mass of matter, utterly helpless. No spark of life, no breath of movement. Not only helplessness, but utter confusion. Not only utter confusion, but total darkness. Not only covered with total darkness, but a prey to the wild waste of stagnant waters. Forsaken, left to itself, what could it do but become more utterly waste and ruined? But

God leaves none of His works to themselves. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Where the Spirit of God comes light and life are sure to follow.

# APPLICATION.

Is my soul in a state of confusion? Without form and void? It was once beautiful with the glow of the Sun of Righteousness upon it, shining through the baptismal dew. Perhaps it seems as if it had never been beautiful at all, but always in a state of barrenness and Perhaps I cannot arrange my thoughts, all seems darkness, all seems confusion; perhaps I can do no good deeds, I know not which to do first, I know not what to do nor where to look. I am left alone and utterly desolate, the deep waters of despair coming up around me in every direction. Take courage: the Spirit of God only leaves those who wish Him to leave them. The Spirit of GoD is brooding over the waters. The Spirit of God is consecrating the waters of baptism for the unbaptized. The Spirit of God is lighting up the tears of repentance for the baptized who have fallen away.

#### AFFECTION.

O Blessed Spirit of God, move over my heart that it may be no longer without form and void. Without Thee all is darkness and confusion; the heaven of my mind, the earth of my body, are equally helpless for good without Thee.

### RESOLUTION.

To ask for the help of the Holy Ghost before beginning prayer or work.

# THOUGHT.

'I believe in the HoLY GHOST, the Lord and Giver of Life.'

# Light.

First Prelude. Picture: The Eastern sky glowing with light.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

'And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.' When God speaks it is done. One moment suffices to turn the whole waste, desolate scene to glowing The light rising over glittering waters—what a glorious picture! But GoD judged His own work: He pronounced the light good. God not only saw and judged His own work, but He divided it from the darkness. The Maker of the universe was careful in His work. He made, He saw, He judged, He placed He divided the good from the bad; or rather, He divided the greater good from the lesser good, the Day from the Night. Power, wisdom, judgment, discrimination-all these were employed by GoD in His work. What a contrast to the slovenliness and carelessness of man !

# APPLICATION.

When the Spirit of God has touched my heart, the first thing I need is light. Light to see myself as I am. Light to know the truth. False lights are wandering about amongst the marshes; it is only by the help of God that I can know the light to be good. It is only

by the Spirit of God that I can divide the light from the darkness. It is only by the Spirit of God that I can know when my heart needs the day, and when it needs the night; when it needs work, and when it needs repose. God grant that I may never wilfully prefer the darkness. When it is dark, we see not our faults; when it is dark, we see not God's goodness. I would rather see my own deformity, however dreadful it may be, and praise God for His goodness in sending me the light, than remain in my ignorance, and fancy all is right. The conviction of my sinfulness must be my first step to repentance.

# AFFECTION.

O Blessed Giver of Light! I mourn that I have been so long content to remain in darkness. Help me, that I may search my heart and drag to light whatever is displeasing to Thee!

# RESOLUTION.

To search my heart by the light of God's Holy Spirit.

# THOUGHT.

' In Thy light shall we see light.'

# Growth.

First Prelude. Picture: A blade of grass appearing above the ground.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

After chaos came the glimmering of light. After light, division, order, sorting, the waters dividing from the waters, the dry land appearing. The earth was separated from the sea, the waters gathered into one place, everything was being prepared for growth. The earth was not to remain barren and useless, the grass, the herb, the tree, were to be brought forth. green blade of grass appeared above the ground; then the herb, useful and good, grew up containing its seed in itself; then the great and beautiful fruit trees raised their lovely forms, and blessed the world with their red and golden fruit, more beautiful probably than anything we now see upon this beautiful but ruined world. Luxuriant vegetation, cool, refreshing, useful, and beautiful, and all endowed with the power of propagation.

# APPLICATION.

When GoD gives light to my soul, He gives the power to separate the waters from the waters. Order and precision follow chaos and confusion. Things are put into their proper places, occupations are assigned to their proper times. A space for prayer is marked off,

a rule of life is carefully prepared, and then I may expect growth. I must not be disappointed if at first there is only a little blade of grass; it may be very small but it is fresh and green. This is my first good work done for God and not for self. In a little while I shall do better. I shall see the herbs growing, the useful herbs which are to be of service to my kind, the strong solid actions which are of real use; and these herbs may 'yield seed,' that is, they are the parents of other good deeds, and they cause other men to do good likewise. Take courage, my soul, and look forward to the time when the beautiful large fruit trees shall grow, deeply rooted in humility, and giving forth their splendid fruit in holy joy and charity, the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost which never fail to propagate themselves.

# AFFECTION.

O God, Who hast caused the earth to bring forth grass, and herbs, and trees, make my heart fertile in good thoughts, good words, good deeds, and grant that these may all have seed within themselves, and bear good fruit for ever.

# RESOLUTION.

Never to be content without some sign of growth, especially in the matter of. . . .

THOUGHT.

'Grow in grace,'

# The Image of God.

First Prelude. Picture: Adam and Eve in their beauty.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

After the herbs and the trees, more light; then the fishes and birds from the waters (the active and the contemplative life coming forth from the waters of baptism), then the other parts of creation, step by step; the living creatures, cattle, creeping things, and beasts. We are apt to fancy that all creation was made for man; on the contrary it was made for God. 'For Thy pleasure they are and were created.' God has a peculiar pleasure in beholding His works. And the greatest of His works upon earth was man. 'Male and female created He them,' glorious in beauty and equal in dignity, and gave them the earth to reign over with a loving rule. And then God rested, and called everything that He had made good.

#### APPLICATION.

The six working days of creation ended in the production of a perfect man and a perfect woman. The work of re-creation should end in the likeness of the new Adam being formed in us. Man was first made in the image of God; the regenerate man must be formed in the image of God. Is this work going on in me?

Will God ever call me good? 'There is none good but God;' but God has made it possible for us to partake of His nature. I was made in the image of God, and I trace this image now, in my powers of construction, arrangement, invention, in my love of beauty and goodness. But in the New Life, I am not only made in the image of God, but I have His nature infused into mine through union with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. How am I corresponding to this great grace? Am I advancing towards the Perfect Man? Am I making any progress from Adam—Red Earth—to Christ, the Anointed One?

# AFFECTION.

O God, Thou canst do all things. Restore me to the Image of God. Thou hast provided all things necessary for this re-creation, only give me a heart to take advantage of them.

# RESOLUTION.

To be satisfied with nothing short of likeness to God.

# THOUGHT.

'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your FATHER in Heaven is perfect.'

# The Fall.

First Prelude. Picture: The serpent speaking to Eve.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

What was the reason of the Fall? Adam and Eve were placed in a beautiful garden with every happiness and delight; one thing only was denied them—the fruit of the tree which was in the midst of the garden. God reserved one tree for Himself; all the rest He gave to them. They were neither to touch nor to eat of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' The Devil was too strong for them. Moved with envy, and determined if possible to thwart the designs of God, he made Eve listen to him, and our first parents fell. Threefold was the temptation. The tree was good for food; it was pleasant to the eye; and a tree to be desired to make one wise. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. The world, the flesh, and the devil. Satan tempted CHRIST as he had tempted Adam, but CHRIST conquered in the desert, and Adam was vanquished in the garden.

### APPLICATION.

I have to go through the same temptation. The path of obedience and the path of disobedience are both open before me. Shall I fall with Adam, or conquer with Christ? The love of pleasure, the love of riches, the

love of honours, are all tempting me, and the serpent is whispering in my ear as he whispered in Eve's. I may not care for the sweetness of the fruit, I may not care for the pleasantness to the eye, but I probably do care for the intellectual snare, the tree to be desired to make one wise. The wisdom of this world is more to me than the wisdom of the kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps I am longing to be cleverer and more intellectual than most of my friends and acquaintances; but do what I can I can never attain to the cleverness of Satan, and what good does it do him?

#### AFFECTION.

O mighty LORD JESUS, who overcame Satan in the desert, have mercy upon me, and lead me in the way of holy obedience, that I may not fall a prey to the wiles of the great rebel.

# RESOLUTION.

To obey GoD's command . . . though I may not understand the reason of it.

THOUGHT.

'Gop hath said.'

# Shame.

First Prelude. Picture: Adam and Eve hiding. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

## CONSIDERATION.

What a change! A change wrought by sin. was the friend of God, and now he becomes His enemy. God trusted him, and the trust was betrayed. God committed the beautiful things of Creation to his charge, and he set them a bad example, and was false to the Creator. God placed him in the garden to dress it and to keep it, and he delivered it over to Satan, the enemy of God. They heard the voice of GoD walking in the garden in the cool of the day; the voice they had so loved, the voice so kind, so tender—the voice of Divine Friendship. But instead of meeting it with joy they hid themselves among the trees of the garden. Their greatest happiness has now become their greatest shame. One sin has changed the whole face of creation, their eyes are opened, disobedience has brought them knowledge, but that knowledge has brought with it shame and sorrow.

#### APPLICATION.

I am surprised at Adam and Eve. I wonder how they could have done such a thing. I feel angry with them sometimes, because they lost their inheritance and brought sin and suffering upon me, their child. Let me see my own guilt. I am placed in a beautiful garden,

the Garden of the Church. I am to dress and keep a portion of it, which is the garden of my heart. The Garden of the Church is watered by four rivers—the river of Baptism, the waters of Prayer, which, S. Chrysostom says, should be a cistern in the midst of the garden, the river of Penitence, to wash out faults, and the refreshing waters of sacred learning, by which we come to the knowledge of God. I am also allowed to eat of the Tree of Life, which is the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and which is in the midst of the garden. But there is something I want which I may not havesomething which it is the will of God I should not have. Am I determined to have this? Am I trying to get it by an act of disobedience? It is only when my wish is thoroughly one with Gon's will, that I can with delight hear the voice of the LORD GOD walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

# AFFECTION.

O Great and Almighty Father, grant that I may never be afraid of Thy voice; grant that I may never be driven by temptation to shun Thee. May my sins be washed out by the tears of penitence and the Blood of Christ, and not remain to condemn me to the blackness of remorse.

# RESOLUTION.

To listen for the voice of God in the evening, 'How hast thou spent the day?'

# THOUGHT.

Deliver us from (the) evil (one).'

# The Sentence.

First Prelude. Picture: Adam and Eve before the light.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

## CONSIDERATION.

The sentence is passed. Exile. Exile from the place of sweet communing with God. Exile from the garden of delights. And what to follow? Three things. Work, pain, sorrow. The three things here which make men sad. Work of a beautiful and happy kind Adam had before, and it was a blessing to him and not a curse; but now the work is to be hard and difficult, and pain and sorrow are to be added to it. Hope is given to cheer the dark-Not only hope, but certainty—the coming of CHRIST. His labour is to sanctify man's labour; His pain is to glorify man's pain. His sorrow-'Was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow?'—His death was to remove the bitterness of death. By Him the whole region of pain and suffering was to be lifted up higher; it was not to be done away with, but to be invested with a new teaching.

# APPLICATION.

Am I discontented with my lot? Am I greedy for happiness, and do I repine at pain, sorrow, labour, subjection? Do I listen to the opinion so loudly proclaimed in these days, 'God meant us to be as happy as possible, God wishes us to enjoy ourselves'—and then turn round

and find that I have little to enjoy and nothing to make me happy, and so think hard thoughts of God? God never sets happiness or enjoyment before us as our aim. The ultimate perfection of our being, and the closest conformity to His will is the real end of man. If I wish my nature to be disciplined, I must not expect to escape suffering. I must not wish it. Sanctification of suffering, not immunity from it, must be my aim. Until this truth is grasped my mind will never be at peace. The old Adam must be crucified. Crucifixion can never be a happy or a pleasant process.

# AFFECTION.

O Merciful FATHER! give me courage and faith that I may accept all the sufferings of this life as the penalty of the past, the discipline of the present, and the earnest of victory in the future.

# RESOLUTION.

Not to expect happiness for myself, but to do all in my power to promote the happiness of others.

# Тноисит.

'Thy Will be done.'

# The First Death.

First Prelude. Picture: Abel lying dead. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Death was the sentence passed upon man; and man, as usual, made God's sentence much worse than it was, for the first death was caused by murder. Religion, as so often since, was the pretext. Worship was the cause of Cain's hatred. The right method of sacrifice was the contention. Religious hatreds have ever been the most violent. Cain was worshipping God after his manner, and yet four of the deadly sins took possession of him,—pride, envy, anger, and covetousness. And when his offering was not accepted, instead of trying to find out whether there might not be some fault in himself, Cain went out and talked with his brother; and from angry words he came to murderous blows.

### APPLICATION.

Does not the subject of religion and religious differences, prosecutions, injustices, excite me more than any other? If so I must be very careful lest, though I be right as Abel, my conduct be as violent as Cain's. It is well to avoid the beginning of contention, lest I be tempted to speak violent words., In the matter of Cain and Abel, he who was in the wrong was guilty of the violence, but in these days those who are in the right

sometimes speak strong words because they feel keenly. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' I must remember that no provocation can justify violence of word or deed. And when I am attacked for my religious practices, and especially for 'sacrifices,' I must remember the example of righteous Abel, and fear no mam, so long as my sacrifice is acceptable unto God.

## AFFECTION.

O Lamb of Gon! that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! When I join with the priest and the congregation in offering Thee before Thy Father, let me not fear what man can do unto me! Cain may be watching, but Abel shall still sacrifice!

# RESOLUTION.

To offer sacrifice in the Church's way only, whatever worldly loss or penalty it may cost me.

#### THOUGHT.

'If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?

# The Walk with God.

First Prelude. Picture: An eagle gazing at the sun. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

'All the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty and five years; 'a figure of a perfect life; 'and Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.' A short life in comparison with that of his father and that of his son, for Jared his father lived 962 years, and Methuselah his son lived o60. Enoch was the best man of the three, and his life was the shortest, and that, too, at a time when long life was looked upon as a great blessing, and when the stores of heavenly wisdom from his lips must have been very precious to his descendants. His father must have looked upon him as cut off in his prime, for he lived for more than 400 years after Enoch was taken. And why did GoD take him? He was a prophet, and prophesied, 'Behold the LORD cometh with ten thousands of His saints;' the seventh from Adam prophesied thus early the future triumph of JESUS and the Catholic Church. Did this give offence to the growing wickedness around him, and did GoD put His hand over him to hide him? Or did the walk with God prove the occasion of the 'taking'? Those who walk together in love are very loth to separate. Enoch was blessed beyond his expectations; he sought the company of his God, and he rejoiced in it for ever. Thus was his holiness rewarded, and thus was the knowledge of an immortal life made clear to the increasing darkness.

# APPLICATION.

The same God Who loved Enoch to walk with Him is waiting for me also. How do I respond to the call? Alas, my eyes are clouded, my ears are deaf, my heart is deadened by the things of this world; I answer nothing, I think only of myself. How much time do I spend upon the world, how little upon GoD! How much time do I spend upon conversation with my fellow-creatures, how little in prayer to GoD! The walk with GoD is the most intimate friendship a human being can have with the Divine Being. Have I ever experienced it? Do I ever wish for it? And yet His love is waiting for me, as it was for Enoch. Enoch gave himself up to it, and was not allowed even to pass through the river of death. Let me give myself up to it, and death will have no bitterness for me.

## AFFECTION.

O FATHER ALMIGHTY! Who gavest Thy friendship to Enoch even before Thy Son's Atonement, have mercy upon me, and for the sake of that Atonement teach Thy baptized though erring child to know the happiness of walking with Thee!

### RESOLUTION.

To spend more time in prayer and meditation.

### THOUGHT.

'Draw nigh unto Him, and He will draw nigh unto you.'

# The Depravity of Man.

First Prelude. Picture: A decaying vine bringing forth corrupt fruit.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

## CONSIDERATION.

Man progresses in the knowledge of the arts and sciences, but he does not seem to progress in the knowledge of God. He dwells in tents, he tends cattle, he handles the harp and the organ, he works in brass and in iron. By degrees the knowledge and love of God grow fainter, and his own corrupt nature asserts itself, showing that civilisation and religion do not always dwell together. The two great sins which ruled the world were impurity and anger. Unlawful desires caused violence, and the whole earth was corrupt before God and full of violence. Corruption and violence proceeding from two passions, love and anger. Self-will reigned supreme; 'they took . . . of all that they chose.'

### APPLICATION.

Am I presuming upon the mercy of God, and following my own self-will? Am I choosing for myself? Independence of character, a strong will, an immense ambition, these are the things admired by the world. Utter dependence upon God, self-denial, a will chastened and humbled, these are the things admired by the whole Company of Heaven. What are the purposes, the

desires, the imaginations of my heart? Are they evil continually, or am I ruling them and obtaining mastery over them! Utter destruction overtook those who were following their own evil desires in the time of Noah; have I any reason to believe that utter destruction will not overtake me?

### AFFECTION.

O JUDGE of all mankind! Let me search into my heart and bring to light all its hidden iniquity. Grant that I may not be allowed to go on in evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, but may repent before it be too late.

## RESOLUTION.

To distrust my own choice, and to ask GoD to choose for me.

### THOUGHT.

'God knoweth the secrets of the heart.'

# The Building of the Ark.

First Prelude. Picture: Noah and his workmen, the ark partly built, busy mockers watching them.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Men and women go on in their accustomed manner. They plant and build; they feast and dance; they marry and are given in marriage. For a hundred and twenty years the hammer sounds in that shipbuilding yard of Noah's. Noah watches his workmen, perhaps works with them: the world watches him and laughs. He perseveres; his sons are born, they grow up, they marry; he is still engrossed with God's work, the building of the ark. His little children ask him for what purpose is that great boat intended, his grown-up sons wonder at the little interest everything else possesses in his eyes. With what pity he must have looked upon the world! With what sadness he must have contemplated the very workmen who obeyed his directions! They too were to be engulfed in the great waters. And still he perseveres, and still the world laughs at him!

# APPLICATION.

Men and women still go on in their accustomed manner. They plant, they build, they feast, they dance, they marry and are given in marriage. And the world is to be destroyed, not by water, but by fire. Am I on the side of the world or on the side of Gop? Am I building a sure place of refuge? A place of refuge to be of use must be finished: the ark half finished would have been of no use at all. Do I persevere, or do I only begin things and then leave them off, because I find others laugh at me, or utterly neglect them? prayer, self-examination, communions, all these are timbers, bolts, and nails, forming the refuge in the last great day. God could have saved Noah without the ark, but He chose to give him 120 years of work in building it. God can save me without the building up of my spiritual life, but He chooses to exercise me in this work during a long or a short life. How am I doing His work?

## AFFECTION.

O dear LORD! Refuge and Ark of sinners, save and sanctify me, and grant that I may shrink from no work and no discipline!

# RESOLUTION.

To pray for perseverance daily.

# THOUGHT.

'Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'

# The Shuf Door.

First Prelude. Picture: The waters rising; the multitude clamouring outside the ark.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Noah, the Preacher of righteousness, preached in vain. His preaching and his life awakened remorse, repentance in none. He only saved his own family—eight persons altogether. Seven is the number of creation; eight is the number of regeneration; one more than seven, for regeneration is a greater act of love than creation. The primitive Christians baptized at the eighth hour, in memory of this mystery. And now the heedless crowds see that the preaching was true, and the

sons who played about the timbers in their childhood see the use of the great vessel. The long procession goes slowly into the ark, and when all are safe within, God Himself shuts the door. The Lord shut him in. Noah could show no pity to the multitude; his former friends, his former workmen, must cry in vain outside; the Lord shut him in, and the world was drowned.

# APPLICATION.

JESUS is the Door, the ark is the Church; many are inside, both clean and unclean. Outside is a mocking multitude. The ark was divided into lower, second, and third stories; there are different degrees in the Catholic Church and in the spiritual life; some for contemplation, like winged birds; some for abundant production of good works, like the fishes; some for labour and sacrifice, like the cattle and the sheep. Let me never despise the companions with whom I am 'shut in.' God's Church has abundant work for all. I am saved by water. saved by water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism; have I ever forgotten this, and instead of behaving like a true child of the Church, joined the mocking multitude outside? Have I ever allowed myself to be called a friend of the Church, a patron of the Church, instead of a child of the Church? Was Noah a patron of God's ark which saved him? Were Noah's children friends of the ark which rescued them? Let me, in all humility, thank Gop Who has placed me in this 'state of salvation.'

### AFFECTION.

O, dear LORD, Thou Who art the true Noah, Rest of the Heart, give my heart rest in Thee, and refuge in the ark of Thy love.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Noah means rest.

### RESOLUTION.

To be content to be 'shut in' by the LORD. To value my privileges and respect my companions.

### Тноиснт

'Rest in the Lord.'

# The Dove.

First Prelude. Picture: The dove and the olive leaf.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

### CONSIDERATION.

The raven, the bird of prey, soon found rest amidst the dead bodies and the wreck of the world. The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot. She pined for her home in the ark. She returned to her home, and Noah pitied her weakness and pulled her in unto him into the ark. Next time the dove stayed a little longer, and only came back to him in the evening. She feared to spend the night on the dark waste of waters, but when she came back she brought a message of peace—the olive leaf. Another interval of rest and patience, and she was sent forth again; this time she fulfilled her mission, and by remaining gave strength to those who had sent her.

The soul that loves GoD is His white dove: she goes not forth from her peaceful rest, be it the life of prayer, the life of seclusion, the hidden life, except at His command; she returns as soon as she can, and finds His hand stretched out to take her and pull her in unto Him in the ark. When He sends her forth again, she refuses not to go, and when she returns it is with a message of peace. Only when sent a third time will she return to the world, giving up her own hidden life for the good of others, finding that thing safe in the way of obedience which would have been dangerous in the way of self-will.

#### APPLICATION.

Which do I love best, the ark or the world? Is the life of prayer a delight to me; do I love to be with God in the ark—do I seek for rest amid the carcasses of worldly hopes? If I am weak, I must not leave the ark save at the command of God; and at the first breath of danger I must fly back to Him. When He sends me forth I must go gladly, but I must come back to Him in the evening, and bring peace, not disturbance, to my family, my community, or my home. If He commands me again to go forth and bear witness for Him in the world, I must do so with joy. The dove knew not that all His creatures were going after her, and we know not what may follow upon our obedience.

#### AFFECTION.

O Thou true Noah! True Rest and Ruler! Let me ever love to be with Thee, to be close to Thee, and yet ready to go and to come, to set forth and to return at Thy good pleasure, bearing evermore the olive leaf of peace.

### RESOLUTION.

To prefer seclusion, but to go forth without murmuring at the command of God.

# THOUGHT.

'When thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee.'

# The Sacrifice.

First Prelude. Picture: The smoking altar; the deserted ark in the distance.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

When Noah and his company went into the ark, they left a struggling, frightened world behind them; when they came forth from the ark, they came forth to desolation. There was not one living soul in all the country round. The teeming cities, the cultivated lands, the wide grazing grounds full of flocks and herds were all one scene of solitary devastation. What a change, and what a terrible effect of sin! What was the first thing Noah did? Did he go and look for the bodies of his friends? Did he lament over lost property? Did he try to make the most of what was left? No; his first care was to build an altar; his next to offer of every clean beast and of every clean fowl to the LORD. He was not told to do this; he did it freely, generously, lovingly out of his own heart. Seven of every clean

bird and beast came out of the ark. 'Little enough,' a worldly man would have said, 'to keep up the supply for all the earth.' No such thought entered into Noah's heart. Of every clean beast and fowl he offered unto the LORD.

#### APPLICATION.

After a great shock, after a great change, after a great trial, after a great affliction, after a great deliverance, what is my first deed? To look about and see what I can save from the wreck? To lament over the days that are gone? To form new plans for the future, unaided and uncounselled by God? To mourn over the little that is saved; to try and keep as much as I can for myself? That is what my poor human nature would do. But I would rather follow Noah's example, and freely throw myself into the arms of God; build Him an altar first and offer to Him the best I have, regardless of the future, regardless of self; and so consecrate the desolation of the surrounding prospect by the sacrifice of a redeemed and grateful heart.

#### AFFECTION.

My dearest LORD, I thank Thee for having saved me so often from the consequences of sin. I pray Thee to give me a willing heart, that everything I have may be consecrated to Thee.

# RESOLUTION.

To put the service of GoD first in every circumstance of life.

#### Тноиснт.

'Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me with sacrifice.'

# The Blessing.

First Prelude. Picture: The animals surrounding Noah and his sons, and looking up to them for food.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

## CONSIDERATION.

Violence and bloodshed were the causes of the Flood. Against violence and bloodshed God now warns mankind. A second time He gives man the dominion over every beast, and every fowl and fish. A second time He blesses man, and desires him to multiply. The care of, and the sovereignty over, all animals are given to him; it was a sacred trust, a mark of confidence from How has man used it? Let the sufferings of animals answer the question. Let overworked horses, overdriven flocks and herds, and that curse of civilisation, vivisection, answer. Truly the innocent blood crying to Heaven for vengeance is not only that of men, women, and children. Helpless dumb animals have been driven to despair by those who were entrusted with the care of them by a merciful Creator. To a generous spirit the words 'Into your hands are they delivered' should be a guarantee of kind treatment, a charter of tender and humane consideration.

#### APPLICATION.

How do I exercise that portion of sovereignty which falls to my share? Am I gentle to all creatures? Am

I careful not to overwork any animal? And am I as careful of other people's animals as of my own? Some people do not mind, for instance, how much horses suffer as long as they are 'hired' ones, and not their own. Am I careful to employ humane men to look after my herds and flocks, and to have the boys I employ taught to be kind to the animals? Am I careful if I have pets that they shall be properly attended to, and not kept merely for my amusement without regard to their own health and cleanliness? When it is necessary to kill animals, do I have it done as quickly and as humanely as possible? (for instance, boiling lobsters to death or bleeding calves to death should be discouraged by all Christians). Am I thoughtful about every living thing, taking no pleasure in fights between animals, but looking forward to the happy time when the lion shall lie down with the lamb?

## AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS, so kind and good to all, make me gentle, thoughtful, and considerate to all creation, remembering that all living things are my fellow creatures, and knowing that all creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for the redemption of all things.

#### RESOLUTION.

Never to pass an instance of cruelty to animals without rebuke or punishment.

# THOUGHT.

'The merciful man is merciful to his beast.'

# The Covenant.

First Prelude. Picture: A rainbow. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

### CONSIDERATION.

God made a covenant with man, and He chose as the token of this covenant the most beautiful thing in creation. The rainbow, no doubt, was familiar to Noah; he had often seen it, but now it was invested with a new meaning. It was a sign of God's love to man; a sign that this world should never again perish by water. rainbow is caused by the sun and by the rain; it comes after a storm; it is of many colours. The most beautiful things in the spiritual life are caused by the mixture of sorrow and joy, of penitence and forgiveness; they come after the conflict and after the grief; they are of many colours—the purple of penitence, the heavenly blue of hope, the red of holy suffering, the gold of perfect love. They are all brought out by the sun and by the rain, and God arranges both after His own good pleasure, and shows His love to the soul by the beauty of His token.

### APPLICATION.

God has made a covenant with me; He will not destroy my soul in the waters of affliction. He has set His bow in the clouds; have I the eyes to see it? Do I bend my head to the storm and walk with my face to the earth, too cowardly or too self-absorbed to see what

is going on in the heavens? Or do I rejoice in His love, watching for His token, and only too glad to point it out to others? In all the troubles of life God sends me a rainbow if I will only see it, but if I turn my back to it and look only at the dark clouds, what wonder that I am desponding and unfit for joy and love? With every storm God sends my heart a message of love, something to tell me that I am the object of His care. With every difficulty He sends me a way out of it. With every temptation some strength and comfort. The rainbow shines and spans the world—a bridge from earth to heaven!

#### AFFECTION.

O Holy and Eternal God, open my eyes that I may see all Thy wondrous mercies to me! Grant that I may never be unthankful or desponding, but always turn cheerfully to Thy promises, and always be faithful to Thy covenant.

# RESOLUTION.

To look on the bright side of everything.

# THOUGHT.

'When I bring a cloud over the earth the bow shall be seen in the cloud.'

# The Tower and the City.

First Prelude. Picture: An immense party of workmen thrown into sudden confusion.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

'Let us build a city and a tower.' A harmless ambition; nay, not only harmless but good, for industry is pleasing to God. But the motive made the action entirely wrong. 'A tower whose top may reach unto Heaven; a tower so high that destruction by another flood would be impossible. Here is distrust of God's promise, for He had said that the earth should never again be destroyed by water. 'Let us make us a name.' Here is vainglory. The longing for their own glory instead of the glory of God. Unbelief and pride are the two things which bind men now to the low flat plains, to the bricks and the slime of the world; but their care is in vain and their labour is naught, for unbelief and pride produce nothing but confusion. The plain may be flat, the bricks well burnt, the slime most adhesive, but all is useless as long as men say, 'Let us build us a city, let us make us a name.'

#### APPLICATION.

Am I building anything? And, if so, what am I building? Building a house, perhaps; founding a

family, making a fortune, building up a reputation? Let us build us a city, let us make us a name.

Have I said this to any of my family, even to myself? If I have, if this is my aim, the end of my life can be nothing but confusion. When I read the lives of those who have lived only for their own fame, I read the records of selfishness and ambition, of longings that never seem satisfied, the building of a half-finished tower, of a city full of noise and confusion. The servants of God may leave no name behind them, but their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. My work is to try how many white stones I can add to the City of God, the City set on a hill, the City which has a Tower reaching up unto Heaven, namely, the Tower of Prayer.

#### AFFECTION.

O FATHER, Almighty and Merciful! May I never seek to do anything for myself or my own glory, but labour steadfastly for Thy glory: like Thy Blessed Son, Who took upon Himself the form of a servant, and counted His own honour as nothing!

#### RESOLUTION.

To make an Act of Faith and an Act of Humility as a remedy for my unbelief and pride.

#### THOUGHT.

'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in.'

# The Confusion of Tongues.

First Prelude. Picture: A father and son made unable, in one moment, to understand each other's speech.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Confusion is the child of presumption; order the child of humility. With the tongue men sinned; through the tongue they were punished. They spoke of the great things they were about to do, they spoke of the great things they longed for; they had no thought of the glory of God, and God showed them how utterly futile the plan for their own glory became. The world is very much in the same position now. It is full of talkers, writers, speakers, thinkers. It is full of plans for the glory of Humanity. Is anything done simply for the glory of God? All else tends to confusion. Plans are made, empires are built up, ministries are formed, States are federated, cities are founded; but the breath of God goes forth—the plans fail, the empires fall, the cities are left half built, the builders are scattered or dead. And all because men prate of what they are going to do, and have no time for silence, no time to listen to the Eternal WORD.

#### APPLICATION.

Am I fondest of talking or listening? Of teaching or learning? Of conversation or of prayer? These

are very important questions, and the answers to them may help me to a clearer view of my spiritual state. My tongue is 'an unruly member,' but at the same time it is 'the best member that I have.' Can I rule it? Can I keep silence when it is right to do so? Can I speak when I ought, however disagreeable it may be? Let me ask God to help me to govern it in an orderly manner, neither letting it run riot, nor forbidding it to speak to the glory of God. The world is full of unnecessary words, full of confusion; let me speak, or be silent, gently, wisely, kindly, always in union with the Word Incarnate.

### AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS CHRIST! Take entire possession of my faculty of speech, as well as of all my other faculties. Let me speak with Thee upon the Cross, or be silent with Thee before Pilate, according to Thy holy wisdom, only save me from presumption and self-will.

#### RESOLUTION.

To practise keeping silence, say for . . . every day.

# THOUGHT,

'The tongue can no man tame.'

# Abram's Alfar.

First Prelude. Picture: A stone altar, a smoking sacrifice thereon in a strange country.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

### CONSIDERATION.

Abram the childless left his father and his own country to seek the inheritance that God had promised him. and he was seventy-five years old when he did this. He believed that he was to become a great nation, but the way in which this was to be done was hidden from him. He was led on by little and little, led on by God Himself; everything depended upon his following that call whenever it came to him. Wherever he rested he built an In every strange country that he sojourned in, he built an altar unto the LORD. He could not do without worship, he could not do without sacrifice. In the plain of Moreh he built an altar unto the LORD; on the mountain near Bethel he built an altar unto the LORD. people of the country may have wondered at him, perhaps they tried to hinder him, perhaps they scoffed at him; he went on with his loving worship, and built an altar unto the LORD. No excuses were his, about having to move, hurried journeys, much business; the Canaanite might be in the land, he heeded not; he felt that he must build an altar unto the LORD, and call upon the Name of the LORD.

#### APPLICATION.

I am in a strange land, and I am, I humbly hope, following the call of God. The Canaanite is in the land. I am sometimes called to the plain of prosperity, sometimes to the mountain of myrrh, sometimes to the city, sometimes to the solitude, sometimes to sorrow, sometimes to joy. And in all these changes and trials what is my first thought—Ease, comfort, quiet, wealth, leisure? Or the worship of God? I am distracted in prayer when in a strange place, I shorten my prayers when I have to start early, I miss my prayers when I know I must soon move, I am ashamed of my prayers when the Canaanite is in the land—when irreligious people are in a crowded room, a carriage, a ship. If I am following the voice of God I must, like Abram, build an altar and offer sacrifice wherever I go, and let nothing keep me from the Christian altar, the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of CHRIST.

#### AFFECTION.

O Almighty God! I thank Thee that Thou hast deigned to call me to follow Thee; grant that wherever I go my first thought may be 'where is the Altar of my God?'

#### RESOLUTION.

To build an altar to the LORD wherever I go, or at least to help others to do so.

#### THOUGHT.

'I will go unto the Altar of God, unto God my ex ceeding joy.'

# Abram's Deceif.

First Prelude. Picture: Abram receiving presents on account of Sarah.

Second Prelude.—Prayer, as before.

## CONSIDERATION.

Abram's troubles came upon him in the fertile land There he found food, but he had nearly lost what was far dearer to him than his riches. his fearless worship, his self-surrender was not complete, for he could not trust Gop to work out his deliverance. A terrible fear came over him in that land of luxury, and to avert his danger he did not actually tell a lie, but he allowed others to think what was not true. This conduct brought its own punishment, his wife was taken from him; and, unwilling to acknowledge his deceit, he had to submit to receive presents from the king who had unknowingly done this evil thing. He became a great man in Egypt, but his tent must have been full of misery and desolation, and all this came upon him because he thought he could find his own way out of a difficulty, instead of taking counsel with the LORD, Who had never failed him.

#### APPLICATION.

Am I perfectly true in everything I do and say? Do I ever try to get out of a difficulty by concealing the truth? Letting a half-truth be known? Telling a white

lie, as it is called, as if lies were not always black? A look may conceal a truth, a turn of a sentence, a smile. May I always remember that the least departure from truth is sure to lead to entanglements without end. How careful I should be to avoid the least misunderstanding, deceit, or exaggeration! When a trouble comes upon me, instead of trying to find a way out of it by human ingenuity, do I take it to God and beg Him to help me? It is my want of faith which hinders me if I do not. Can I not trust God when He has taken such care of me all my life? Does He not know all the past and future of my career? And will He not help me without my having resort to unworthy subterfuges? Let me try.

#### AFFECTION.

O God, Who art always ready to help those who trust in Thee, grant that I may walk in the ways of truth, and that I may never choose my own wisdom instead of Thine, but may rely entirely upon Thee.

#### RESOLUTION.

For the truth, as well as against the utterance of falsehood.

## THOUGHT.

'O LORD my GOD, in Thee do I put my trust.'

# The New Beginning.

First Prelude. Picture: A great company journeying towards an altar in the distance.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

### Consideration.

Abram is making a fresh start. He is going up out of the land of Egypt. He went there to avoid a grievous famine, but he found there something worse than a famine, trials and temptations; earthly riches, but spiritual destitution. It is not said that he built an altar in Egypt, and yet he could not have been satisfied with the religion He goes up out of the land with flocks of that land. and herds, very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. Even thus the thousands of his descendants were to leave Egypt hundreds of years after, very rich in cattle, and laden with Egyptian silver and gold. Where is Abram journeying with that great company? To the place where his tent had been at the beginning-between Bethel and Hai. And what was his attraction? The place of the Altar which he had made there at the first.

He is going to the place where he worshipped GoD before he distrusted Him and took things into his own Much has happened since that happy time when he offered sacrifice with an innocent heart; but now the Friend of GoD is going back to the Altar of GoD, to call upon the Name of the LORD; to learn to distrust himself

and to trust in God.

# APPLICATION.

I am often disgusted with myself and with what I have done. But I do not know how to amend it. And I am often tempted to stay where I am, out of very shame, sometimes out of laziness. Up, out of the land of Egypt! Up, out of the ways of the world! There should be no tarrying in the path of deceit, in the ways of luxury and irreligion! And when I know I am wrong, when I feel I have made a mistake, that I am no longer what I was, that I have chosen my own path instead of waiting for God to choose it for me, instead of remaining in Egypt or wandering forth into unknown lands, let me fly back to the place where my tent was in the beginning, let me go to the place of the Altar. And though I have suffered severely, I may come back the richer, bringing with me cattle for sacrifice, good works for burnt offerings, the gold of love tried seven times in the fire, the silver of wisdom refined until the face of the Refiner is seen in it.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD! I thank Thee that Thou art so graciously calling sinners to repentance! Grant that I may always listen to Thy call, and never by neglecting it run the risk of turning repentance into 'remorse.'

## RESOLUTION.

To begin my new life by returning to the Altar of God.

#### THOUGHT.

'I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I go to Thine Altar.'

# Wealth and Strife

First Prelude. Picture: The herdmen quarrelling. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

In the days of adversity Abram and Lot had dwelt very peaceably together. Now they are both rich, and their riches cause separation. The Canaanite and the Perizzite are dwelling in the land; and yet friends, brothers, countrymen, must needs quarrel before them. Their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. The old free, happy days of intimacy had departed; each had his great retinue, each had his great possessions. Neither Abram nor Lot could obey the dictates of his heart, they must needs be domineered over by the disputes of their shepherds. And thus it has been ever since: when the Church grows rich the herdmen quarrel, and the herdmen are not ashamed to quarrel even before the Canaanite and the Perizzite who dwell in the land. 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.'

#### APPLICATION.

What are my feelings about earthly riches? Do I seek for them, or do I fly from them? Do I long for them, little considering the burden, the care, the trouble, the disputes, the divisions which they cause? And yet in

themselves they are good things, and are often sent as blessings from the LORD. But the corruption of the human heart turns God's blessings oftentimes into curses, and when the flocks increase the herdmen quarrel. When I am poor and no course is open to me but one—that of a regular and laborious life, Abram and Lot are at peace in my heart; there is no disputing, for there is nothing to dispute about. But when the flocks, and the herds, and the servants increase, when riches increase, and they are increased that eat them, then strife is aroused and my soul is full of conflict. Then let me be careful in the day of prosperity: the day of adversity brings its own discipline, but the day of prosperity is full of temptations.

#### AFFECTION.

O my God! If Thou shouldest give me earthly riches, give me also the true riches of heavenly wisdom and love: and if Thou shouldest send me the trial of poverty, give me grace to thank Thee for the absence of strife.

# RESOLUTION.

To seek for poverty of spirit in the day of my riches; riches of grace in the day of my poverty.

## THOUGHT.

'There is a gain that turneth to loss.'

# Jos's Choice.

First Prelude. Picture: Abram and Lot standing on the hill.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Abram offers Lot his choice. The elder gives way to the younger, the uncle to the nephew, the superior to the inferior. Lot chose the well-watered plain of the He chose the best. He chose at once, as young people are apt to do, that which looked the fairest. And what came of it? Firstly, separation; secondly, vexation; thirdly, a bare escape with his life. An easy-going, worldly life leads to great trouble. righteous man may fall into slackness of living simply by dwelling with those who fear not God. At any rate, he endures the misery of seeing God despised. Lot, when he chose all the plain of Jordan, probably little thought that he would be a dweller in Sodom. He pitched his tent towards Sodom, but did not intend then to be an inhabitant of the city of iniquity. Though the plain be fertile and well-watered, the neighbourhood of sinners is injurious. It looks like the garden of the LORD, but in reality it is the garden of the devil.

#### APPLICATION.

What is my first impulse when I am asked to make a choice? Is it not to choose what looks fairest.

brightest, richest—that which seems easiest to do and sweetest to enjoy? The very fairness is deceptive; the very sweetness is full of bitterness. I must not forget that I live in a ruined world, where everything must be tested by its fairness in God's sight. But how am I to know what to choose? By the aid of the Holy Spirit, as a baptized Christian I have a right, a positive right, to call upon Him for His help and counsel. In general it is safest to choose a hard way—a mountain path, a hill-country; but when I am in doubt I must spread my doubt before the Lord. It is not said that Lot asked counsel of Jehovah. Had that righteous man done so, he would perhaps have avoided great sorrows.

#### AFFECTION.

Grant, Blessed LORD, that I may never regard my own ease and comfort, but may only seek to fulfil Thy holy will! Give me grace to resist the false attractions of earthly riches and luxury, and to choose the desert with Thee rather than the plain of Jordan with the ungodly!

#### RESOLUTION.

To make no choice without asking guidance from the Spirit of counsel.

#### THOUGHT.

'I will guide thee with Mine eye.'

# Abram's Fortion.

First Prelude. Picture: Abram alone, looking over the whole land.

Sccond Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

When Lot left Abram, God came to him. Men leave us, God comes instead. Abram took what was left. It was the worst portion to human eyes, but in reality it was the best, for it was the whole. But it was to be signed with the sign of the Cross. Abram was to look northward and southward, then eastward and westward. He was then to arise and walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it, thus signing it with the sign of the Cross. The sign of Him Who was to walk through it afterwards. It was thus to be consecrated, and set apart, and taken possession of. He received this glorious promise after his act of renunciation, after he had preferred Lot to himself; and after he had received the promise, his heart overflowed with thankfulness, and the first thing he did was to build an altar unto the LORD in Hebron. He did not look onwards to the nations which were to proceed from him. He felt no pride in the destiny which was mapped out before him; but he looked back to the LORD JEHOVAH Who had given him the promise, and gloried in building an altar for His worship.

#### APPLICATION.

Does God come to me when I give up, or when I maintain a stout hold of what I consider my rights? Do I not find that when I give up all human consolation, God is very near to me? Has He not often given me sevenfold for my slight self-denials? Why, then, should I be so anxious to take care of myself when He can take care of me so much better? He will give me a portion. an inheritance, it may be an earthly portion marked with the sign of the Cross, or a spiritual inheritance, something too glorious for me even to appreciate now in the present state of my spiritual perceptions. Let me trust Him, and when He draws nigh to me and cheers me with His consolations, and rejoices me with His promises, let me not take delight only in His consolations, only in His promises, but in Himself; and then my greatest privilege and consolation will be not to aggrandise myself, or those I love, but to honour Him in His service and to build an altar for His glory.

#### AFFECTION.

O Holy Lord God, Who giveth us our portion and the lot of our inheritance, give me grace to lay aside all selfishness and to trust in Thee to provide for all my wants. Let me choose Thee for my portion, and may Thy worship be my delight. I may look northward and southward, and eastward and westward, but I shall see nothing so fair as Thy love!

#### RESOLUTION.

To avoid all disputes concerning temporal goods, choosing less rather than more.

#### THOUGHT.

' He looked for a city which hath foundations.'

# The Battle with the Kings.

First Prelude. Picture: Abram's sword. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

The place of riches is the place of danger. Sodom brings no peace to Lot. The kings of the cities of the plain are attacked by the king to whom they owe tribute, and are conquered by him and his allies. Lot is involved in their quarrels. His riches excite the avarice of the four kings; they carry him off, with all that belongs to him. Then the Friend of God behaves as God does when man is in trouble. He does not sit down and say, 'Lot brought this trouble upon himself; he chose his companions, let him abide by the consequences of his choice.' No; he takes three hundred and eighteen of his picked men, and goes by night against that great army, and delivers his nephew with all that belonged to him. Abram is a man of peace, but he can draw his sword for his friend. When the worshipper of the true God is alone amongst the heathen, the Friend of God chooses his picked men-for nearly all great things have been done by small numbers-and no danger deters him, no army can frighten him, for he knows God is with him, and his brother must be saved.

# APPLICATION.

I have a sword. It is the sword of the Spirit. Do I use it to deliver my brother? Many have gone astray,

and stood in the way of sinners, and sat in the seat of the scornful. Do I say, 'Let them alone, they have chosen their path, they are taken captive by sin, it is a fitting reward for their carelessness'? When I know their danger, nothing can absolve me from the responsibility of their fate. I must do all I can for their deliverance. Many are against me, but God is with me. I must take my picked men, tried and trusty friends, who feel and know how dreadful sin is; and I must go against the army of vice and rescue my brother. The night of adversity is often the best time to deliver him.

I have failed in doing this; I have been occupied with my own affairs only; I have not followed the example of Abram in rescuing my brother from the very camp of the enemy: I have not followed the example of my Saviour in condescending to men of low estate.

# AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST! Who died for our sins, grant that, mindful of all Thou hast done for me, I may be ready to go anywhere, and to do anything, for the rescue of a brother or sister made captive by sin!

#### RESOLUTION.

To do all I can against the four kings of the age— Intemperance, Immorality, Love of money, Lawlessness—and so heartily to strive for the rescue of . . .

#### THOUGHT.

'He which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.'

# Melchizedek's Blessing.

First Prelude. Picture: The Paten, the Chalice. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The King of Sodom comes out to meet Abram and The King of Salem comes out to offers him riches. meet Abram and offers him a blessing. Abram refuses to take the riches of Sodom; and instead of taking, he gives tithes to Melchizedek. He turns from Sodom and looks to Salem, and Salem brings him the kiss of peace. The King of Salem was the Priest of GoD; he was greater than the patriarch Abram, for the less is blessed of the greater. Abram, by the rescue of his nephew, won the approval of the head of his race and the Priest of the Most High, and what was his reward? Bread, wine, and a blessing. A worthless one in the sight of the world, worthless in comparison of the offered spoil; but how great and precious in the eyes of Abram, what a pledge to him of the loving-kindness of Gop!

#### APPLICATION.

When I rescue my brother from his enemies,—sin, worldliness, sorrow, suffering of any kind,—what reward do I seek? Do I expect the King of Sodom to come out to meet me with his riches, or do I look for the King of Salem with his blessing? The riches of the King of Sodom may be praise, a good name, influence,

material prosperity. Am I fond of these, and do I seek to gain them? If so, I shall infallibly fall back to the world and its influences. Do I wait for the King of Salem, the true Melchizedek? His reward may seem nothing to the world, but it ought to be everything to me, for it is Himself-His Body and Blood. And when He comes to meet me, in the early morning, at His altar, is He not my great reward, and far above all the riches of the world? His blessing is then the most glorious song of praise which could greet a victor's ear. His approval, though whispered, so low that not another soul can hear it, the most entrancing message that a Christian heart can know. Have I thought of this? Do I act upon it? Is the voice of the King of Salem dearer to me than all the praises of all the Cities of the Plain, and all the riches of the King of Sodom? If not, why not?

# Affection.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, our great High Priest, of Whom Melchizedek was but a figure, grant that I may learn to separate the true from the false, and to choose Thy Blessing above all the attractions of the world. If, by Thy grace, I do a right thing, let me thank Thee at Thine altar, and give Thee tithes of all.

#### RESOLUTION.

After every battle with sin, to meet the Priest of the Most High God when he brings forth bread and wine.

### Тноиснт.

'I will receive the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD.'

# The Faith of Abram.

First Prelude. Picture: The sky studded with stars. Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

Abram refused the riches of the King of Sodom, and the word of the LORD came to him. He turned away from earth, and he was shown Heaven. He refused the reward of the earthly monarch, and the LORD GOD said unto him, 'I am thy exceeding great reward.' offered him a reward. The Septuagint translation has this: 'Thy reward shall be exceeding great.' Abram asked for his reward by reminding the LORD that he was childless. He asked for one son, and God brought him forth under the stars, and told him that he should have thousands and tens of thousands. He asked for Isaac. and he was given JESUS. And all he was told to do was to believe. This is the way in which our Heavenly Father treats His faithful children. He gives them more than either they desire or deserve. And He only requires Faith from them. Faith to believe in His wonderful and incomprehensible blessings. They can make Him no return; they ask Him for little, and He gives them much; they ask Him for one gift, and He gives them sevenfold.

#### APPLICATION.

Abram received this promise after he had turned from the gifts of the King of Sodom. I cannot expect to enjoy the promises of GoD and the promises of the world as well. I cannot serve God and Mammon. If I turn from the vanities and vices of the world, the glories of the Kingdom of God open before me. God brought Abram out in the still night under the stars. Do I ever give Him time to bring me out in the still night, and show me the stars and make me His glorious promises? There are numberless blessings for me also, if I only listen to His voice and keep my heart disengaged for Him, and Him only. Leisure to listen to His promises, and Faith to believe them: this is what God requires.

How wonderful that the King and Maker of all should only require faith in His servants, and that He should find it so seldom; and how wonderful that He should count this faith as a thing worthy of reward! The faith that Abram had was not a mere sentimental feeling, a thing depending on spirits, health, or weather, but it was a sustaining Faith, a Faith which made him do great deeds and bear great trials.

#### AFFECTION.

O Glorious Father, King of the Universe, give me this great gift of Faith, this sustaining, strengthening Faith, which may enable me to bear all the troubles of life with calm and even joyful trust in Thee, knowing that Thy promises are true for evermore, and that nothing can destroy the glorious heritage of those who are spiritually the children of Abraham, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

#### RESOLUTION.

To remember that I, as a Christian, am a living token of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham.

#### THOUGHT.

'He went out, not knowing whither he went.'

# The Covenant with Abram.

First Prelude. Picture: Abram alone, driving away the vultures; the sun going down.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

#### Consideration.

This country, full of wickedness, riches, luxury, ruled by powerful kings, full of warlike nations, was promised to Abram. The fulfilment of the promise seemed im-No wonder he asked for a sign. The sign was asked for the confirmation of his faith; but the sign itself brought him suffering and terror, though the covenant it set forth was a glorious one. His faith had been tried, and now the trial came to his patience and his courage. He was to offer of his best-an offering from every kind of animal under his care, three from the earth, two from the air. The three were to be three years old, in the prime of their strength, of the best of the herds and the flocks. Five is the number of sacrifice, and symbolises the five wounds, the five crosses marked on an altar stone. The covenant was made by dividing the animals, and each party concerned passing between them. The heifer, the ram, and the goat were divided, for they represent the things of earth, and must be severed; but the birds were not divided, for they represent the things of Heaven, and soar upwards in the form of the Cross. And when Abram had offered all these to God, the birds of prey came down to devour

them. And God came not, but the sun set, and darkness and horror came over Abram. Then, when the darkness and horror were at their worst, the voice of the LORD was heard, and the light of His Presence passed between the pieces of the sacrifices, and, for his five animals, Abram received ten nations.

#### APPLICATION.

I have received great promises from the Blessed and Holy Trinity. Who has made a covenant with me through JESUS CHRIST my LORD. But do I think of these promises, and am I prepared to realise my covenant as Abram realised his? I must be alone. No one can do it for me. I must give to God of my best-labour. patience, endurance, loving thoughts, a heart mounting far on high. I must endure severance, sacrifice, and, above all. I must wait GoD's time. Instead of entering into the possession of the land, I may have to give my best, and then see it in danger from the devil, and wicked men, the vultures, and birds of prey; and the darkness of sorrow may come around, and I may cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' But the horror and the darkness will cease some day, and I shall see the light of the Presence passing through the pieces of the sacrifice, and I shall receive double for all my sorrows, and the Promised Land will be mine for ever.

#### AFFECTION.

O great and glorious God! I adore Thy Majesty and Thine awful Presence! I pray Thee to grant me courage and patience, that when I am tried I may not fail, but watch steadfastly, and rest peacefully, certain that Thou wilt come at last through the darkness.

### RESOLUTION.

To shrink from no trial that will bring me nearer to Gop.

# THOUGHT.

'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'

# Impatience for Blessings.

First Prelude. Picture: Sarai bringing Hagar to Abram.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

## CONSIDERATION.

Another long time of waiting after the promise of offspring had been again made to Abram. Sarai grew tired of waiting, and, despairing of the fulfilment of the promise, tried to get it fulfilled in a way of her own. Abram connived at her proceeding, and thereby showed a slight faltering in his own faith. He thus prepared the way for divisions and rivalry in his own family, and brought in the evil custom of more than one wife, a custom which has been the curse of the descendants of Ishmael. Ten years more was a long time to wait with

no apparent result; but if they had waited patiently, trusting in God, Who had brought so many wonderful things to pass, who knows what quarrels, complications, and misery might not have been avoided? A blessing snatched from God's hand before His own good time becomes no more a blessing, but a curse.

# APPLICATION.

Have I not often sinned by trying to hurry GoD's plans for me? Have I not forgotten that even our LORD says of His own plans, 'My time is not yet come.' I want everything at once; I try to hurry events; I try to hurry the work in my own soul, I try to hurry the work in the souls of others. Because I am not greedy or impatient for worldly riches and honours I think I have a right to be impatient in spiritual things. God does not work fast enough to please me; I must then take the matter into my own hands, and, in doing this, what sad mistakes I make! How I bungle and confuse my own affairs and those of others; how roughly I treat souls; how despairing I grow about my own faults! May I learn patience with God, patience with others patience with myself. The word must be spoken in season, the deed must be done at the right time; in worldly things the man waits for the hour, in spiritual things the man is too prone to anticipate GoD's hour or to neglect it altogether.

#### AFFECTION.

O FATHER ALMIGHTY! I know that Thy promises are sure to be fulfilled! Grant that I may not be impatient when the fulfilment is delayed. Give me patience and faith that I may not try to seize Thy blessings before

the time, but may thank Thee for the discipline of waiting, for the longer the waiting the greater the blessing.

### RESOLUTION.

To bear hindrances and delays cheerfully.

THOUGHT.

'Wait patiently for Him.'

# The Covenant with Abram.

First Prelude. Picture: Abram on his face before God.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

# CONSIDERATION.

Another period of waiting. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. Then God appears to Abram and tells him to be perfect, and changes his name. Were these protracted times of waiting the discipline that was to perfect his soul? It may have been so, and yet another trial awaits him; the rite of circumcision is to set him and his house apart, in special covenant with God. 'Be ye perfect,' is the admonition. Pain follows the admonition, and after this the promise is to be fulfilled. Thus, step by step, Abram is led on, and all through his long probation, each step brings him nearer to God. Why

was Isaac so long in coming? Why was his birth prefaced by so many trials and so much waiting? Was it not to set forth the coming of the spiritual Isaac, the LORD JESUS, after the many trials and the much waiting of the human race?

### APPLICATION.

God tells Abram to be perfect, and gives him circumcision. God tells us to be perfect-- Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect'—and gives us Baptism. Baptism is not painful, but the renunciation which belongs to baptism is painful. The cutting off of all that ministers to unbelief, self-indulgence, and vanity, must follow God's call to perfection. Abram's new name was given him when the painful rite of circumcision was ordered; my Christian name was given me when renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil was promised for me. The Promised Land, the vision of God, was then held out to me as my glorious portion, and I may, if I choose, have a spiritual offspring, by teaching the innocent and saving the lost. Having this covenant, having these promises, am I living a different life to the life I should be living without them? Am I a self-denying Christian, or am I a Christian undistinguishable from a polished, humane pagan?

#### AFFECTION.

ALMIGHTY FATHER! I thank Thee for having brought me into covenant with Thee! I pray Thee to make me duly sensible of my high and holy destiny! I honour Thee as my Sovereign Lord and King, and, like Abram, I fall on my face before Thee, for I have no strength except in Thy strength.

#### RESOLUTION.

To cut off such an indulgence—which I know to be contrary to the will of my God.

## THOUGHT.

'And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.'

# Abraham's Hospifality.

First Prelude. Picture: Abraham washing the feet of the messengers.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

### CONSIDERATION.

Abraham resting in the heat of the day—the heat of the plains of Mamre. An interruption comes. Visitors, disturbing his repose, rouse him to exertion. He knows not their divine mission, their divine character, yet he turns not away his eyes. Directly he saw them he ran to meet them, he entreated them to come and rest. He does not turn them over to the care of others, he looks after them himself. In spite of the heat he hastens to the tent, he runs to the herd, he gives minute directions to Sarah about the bread, and when all is done he stands by them under the tree and watches them eat. And who were the Heavenly visitors? Three angels? or a manifestation of the Holy Trinity? or an appearance of the

Second Person attended by two angels? The most ancient writers consider that this last is the probable explanation, and if so what a mysterious meal, what a foreshadowing of future things, man washing the feet of his Redeemer, little knowing that one day his Redeemer would wash the feet of twelve men! And then, as usual after every great event, comes the promise repeated and particularised.

### APPLICATION.

Here is a work of mercy done for its own sake in all simplicity, and followed by an immense blessing. How many blessings I may have lost by inattention to the wants of others? How often have I missed the opportunity of doing a kindness, and thus failed to welcome the LORD JESUS? Am I not unwilling to give up my repose, difficult to rouse when weary, averse to trouble, thoughtless of the comfort, the repose, the refreshment of others? Let me remember the free-hearted hospitality of Abraham, his entreaties to his guests, his alacrity in serving them, his liberality-both as to quantity and quality—the abundance of the flour, the goodness of the meat, the minute direction, the personal attendance. Let me not think anything of my own trouble, whether in the heat of the day, or the depth of the night, but see the LORD JESUS in my guests, and remember the blessing a work of mercy brings upon the house whence it proceeds.

## Affection.

O God! give me grace to open my heart to all who are in need of rest or refreshment, and to look upon all comers as sent by Thee, carrying a message from Thee, bearing blessings from Thee, and, perchance, bringing me nearer to Thee.

### RESOLUTION.

To grudge no personal trouble in the duties of hospitality.

THOUGHT.

'Some have entertained angels unawares.'

# Abraham's Infercession.

First Prelude. Picture: Abraham praying with hands extended.

Second Prelude. Prayer, as before.

### CONSIDERATION.

Two of the men who had been entertained by Abraham went on to Sodom; the third, who is called the LORD, stayed behind. He had a revelation to make to Abraham—a tale of wickedness, a sentence of judgment to tell him. The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, the judgment of God. And what was Abraham's feeling on hearing this? Was it, 'It serves them right; I knew things could not long go on so?' No, it was that of intense anxiety—for fear one righteous man should perish with the wicked. And then began Abraham's beautiful intercessory prayer; waiting for the answer to each petition, particularising the number he was praying for, continuing patiently, perseveringly, until the city was to be

saved for ten. Wonderful spectacle! Man interceding with God for his fellow man; foreshadowing the great intercession—that of the God-man for His people! Who knows, if Abraham had gone on with his prayer, whether the city might not have been saved for *one*, even for Lot; and the wicked Moabites and Ammonites might never have been born?

## APPLICATION.

How much time, how much thought, do I spend in intercessory prayer? Much or little? Very little; and yet there is no way by which I can help my friends so By intercessory prayer I can avert judgments, convert sinners, tend the sick and send comfort to the But my prayer must be definite and earnest, sorrowful. particular as well as general; and I must watch for the answer, and take an interest in it. Many are the prayers I send, scarcely knowing what I pray for. May I feel the intense anxiety which Abraham felt when praying for the wicked cities. I know not how many blessings my friends have lost through my carelessness; I know not how many good works have languished through my want of faith and prayerfulness! Many are the things which trouble and distress me both in Church and State. Had I praved more, I might have averted some of them. Abraham had gone on praying, Sodom might have been converted. I am the Friend of God by covenant with JESUS CHRIST; if I had prayed more earnestly, my own parish, my own city might have turned thoroughly to Him.

#### AFFECTION.

O God, have mercy upon me, and give me a loving heart and the power of prayer. May I realise more and more the wonderful gift which Thou hast given me—the

command to pray for my fellow-creatures, and the certainty that intercessory prayer is acceptable to Thee!

## RESOLUTION.

To spend at least five minutes . . . one quarter of an hour . . . daily in intercessory prayer.

### THOUGHT.

'Pray for one another.'

# Lot's Warning.

First Prelude. Picture: Lot sitting in the Gate of Sodom in the evening, the two angels standing before him.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding, and to strengthen my will, that I may meditate upon this history with a solemn mind and penitent heart.

## CONSIDERATION.

Three angels came to Abraham, two to Lot. The angel called 'the LORD' had departed after His colloquy with Abraham. The other two sought out the sojourners in the wicked city. From the conduct of Lot with regard to his daughters, it is easy to see that his stay in Sodom had blunted his moral susceptibilities, for we

must not do evil that good may come, nor must we choose a lesser evil to avoid a greater. The virtue of hospitality had remained in Lot in spite of the luxury and selfishness of the place. And in spite of the dangers which appeared to threaten them, those pure and holy angels remained all night in Sodom. But how corrupt is the human heart! Notwithstanding the awful example of depravity he had witnessed. Lot is seized with sorrow at having to leave the city. The angels have to use force to make him quit it, and also to take his wife and daughters by the hand, whilst his son-in-law refused to go. Out of the whole city, six persons were warned. Of these, two refused to go, one looked back, and only half this small number was saved. And when Lot was told of the impending destruction, he felt no sorrow. He did not pray for the city where he had lived so long, but selfishness had taken possession of his heart, and he exclaims, 'I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil overtake me and / die!'

### APPLICATION.

Am I fully aware of the importance of the atmosphere in which I live? Am I particular about the books I read, the friends I make, the people I associate with? Am I careful enough about the companionship of my own thoughts? It is most important to keep up a high tone of feeling with regard to conversation, manners, employment, and associates. By lowering my standard, I blunt my moral sense, I give way to sloth, I become hard and selfish. I may dwell in the cities of the plain, as surely as Lot did, by giving way to enervating habits—habits which unfit me for prayer, study, and work. Late rising, lounging about, excessive novel reading, love of ease and self-indulgence, these are a few of the things

which unhinge the spiritual life. When I find anything of the kind gaining a mastery over me, I must escape to the mountain; the bracing air of self-denial, discipline, retreat, is the only thing to save me.

### AFFECTION.

O my God, Thou hast sent two angels to awaken me from my night of self-indulgence—Thy holy Voice and the voice of my conscience. I mourn for the slackness and self-indulgence of my life. I entreat Thee to help me to overcome it, and to save me from my own irresolution. And in order to overcome my bad habits, I hereby make this promise to Thee, that I will . . . .

### RESOLUTION.

Give up such a bad habit. . . . Or begin such a good one. And in order to bear this resolution in my heart, I will remind myself of it with this sentence:—

### THOUGHT.

'Escape to the mountain.'

# Looking Back.

First Prelude. Picture: Lot's wife turning to gaze upon Sodom.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to move my will, that I may gain the fruit of this meditation, and obtain a holy horror of indecision

#### CONSIDERATION.

Reluctant as Lot was to leave the scenes of vice, still more reluctant was his wife. He went on slowly enough, she stayed behind him. When the angels left them, she sank back into the listlessness and sloth of one who has lost the power of being shocked by sin. She lingered: here was the first beginning of her fall. She then turned, turned round to gaze upon evil; turned to mourn over the beautiful city-not with the mourning of Abraham, not with the plaint of intercession, but with the regret that she could no longer partake of its pleasures, no longer enjoy its ease, no longer mix in its society. And then the judgment came. She partook of the doom of Sodom; struck down probably by the brimstone and fire, killed by the sulphurous fumes, she was covered with salt and left there without burial—a warning and a byword to the undecided and the lover of evil company. Oh, what a fearful judgment! Marked out for safety, warned by angels, removed by force, preceded by her husband, and vet lost; preferring death with the ungodly to loneliness with Gop.

## APPLICATION.

Perseverance is the gift of God. I must not be content with feeling that I am in the right path, I must pray that I may continue in it. Looking back is the source of all falling back. When we have been called from the city of ease and pleasure, we must press on steadily to the mountain, whether it be the mountain of spiritual joy, the mountain of transfiguration, or the mountain of pain and suffering—the Mountain of Calvary. I am not decided enough. I am apt to linger. I do not make a good use of my time. If I linger, I may turn round and view those things from which I have fled. If God were to with-

draw His grace, I should soon go back to them. And if it be wrong to look back upon past sinful pleasures, it is also wrong to look back upon past projects—things which God did not allow us to carry out, past schemes, it may be even good schemes; past failures, which may discourage us in the present time; past follies, which we have repented of long ago. When sins have been repented and confessed, it is a bad habit to go over them again and again. I must resolutely face eastward, and keep the narrow mountain-path. Past pleasures, past schemes, past failures, past follies, are all nothing to me now. If I have not begun already to fly from them, I can begin to-day. What hinders me!

### AFFECTION.

O my God, I thank Thee, from the bottom of my heart, for calling me from my self-indulgent and worldly life. I pray Thee to make me hasten more and more from every scene of temptation, every evil companion. Give me the gift of perseverance, and fill my heart full of joy and thankfulness for Thy great goodness in saving me thus far. I will by Thy help refrain from all sad broodings over the evil of past years, and will strive to keep this resolution.

#### RESOLUTION.

To dismiss from my mind such a matter, once decided; and to remember the words of the Apostle:—

#### THOUGHT.

'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.'

# The Dream of Abimelech.

First Prelude. Picture: Abimelech restoring Sarah to Abraham.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God! I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to rouse my will, that I may meditate with profit upon this history, and may learn to listen for Thy voice and to obey it when heard.

## CONSIDERATION.

Twenty-three years after Sarah had been taken by Pharaoh, King of Egypt, twenty-three years after Abraham had sought by a subterfuge to save his own life, the same things happen again. Sarah is taken by Abimelech, the King of the Philistines; Abraham has had recourse to the same subterfuge. What a lesson to many Christians is the conduct of this heathen king. Righteous and just, he has no intention of wronging Abraham; full of love for his people his exclamation is, 'LORD, wilt Thou slay also a righteous nation?' God knew his integrity, and, therefore, came to him in a dream to save him. Abimelech hesitates not for a moment: the feelings in his mind are anxiety to prove his own rectitude of intention, solicitude for his people, indignation at the deception which had been practised upon He was angry at having been so madly led into sin, not, as so many are, glad of the excuse to commit sin when the blame can be laid upon others. No sooner is the truth revealed to him than he hastens to repair the wrong.

#### APPLICATION.

If I do not sin openly, I am often tempted to take advantage of other people's sins. A little want of rectitude on the part of another will sometimes give me the opportunity. Self-indulgence may be made easy by the fraud of another. A mean advantage may be taken of the faults of my fellow-creatures. In the common affairs of the day, I may often save myself or enjoy myself at the expense of another. When I am alone in the silence of the night do I never hear GoD speaking to me, and telling me that things are not as I suppose them to be, and setting before me the necessity of a nobler, juster line of conduct? And what has been my answer? Have I tried to persuade myself that it was a delusion, a dream of the night; or have I, like Abimelech, hastened to repair the wrong and to alter my conduct? The Philistine King was not satisfied with restoring Sarah, he gave Abraham a thousand pieces of silver, besides sheep and oxen and servants. Justice was followed by generosity. And I, a Christian, a baptized soldier and servant of IESUS, how do I treat my fellow-Christians; with meanness, sharpness, and narrowness, or with the open hand of Christian love?

#### Affection.

O my God, I thank Thee for showing me the evil and the meanness of my own heart. I implore Thee to give me Abimelech's justice and generosity: I entreat Thee to make my ears sensitive to Thy word, to make my heart a listening heart, that it may be attentive to Thy warnings. I deplore that I have allowed the noise of the world and its evil customs to deceive me, and I

pray Thee to visit me in the silence of the night, and to tell me wherein I have sinned.

I do from my heart resolve :---

## RESOLUTION.

To listen to God's voice and to obey it at once, especially in such a matter. . . .

And to remember this true word of praise:-

## THOUGHT.

'I will thank the LORD for giving me warning.'

# The Fromise Julfilled.

First Prelude. Picture: The aged Abraham contemplating the infant Isaac.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to excite my will, that I may meditate profitably upon Thy faithfulness, and draw therefrom fresh hope and trust.

## CONSIDERATION.

The waiting was long, but the promise was fulfilled at last. The child so long expected was born. What joy for Abraham! What happiness for Sarah! The child was called Isaac, which means Laughter. The joy of the parents produces laughter, and the name fore-shadows the joy which the birth of the true Isaac, the descendant of the son of Abraham, the joy of the whole earth, was to bring to all who would receive Him. How common the expression, 'He laughed for joy.' It is often applied to the things of this world, but few feel such

delight in the things of the spiritual life. And yet any great spiritual blessing should bring such brightness, such joy, that this joy might be akin to laughter. We feel worldly joys with intense, almost extraordinary delight, but we take our spiritual joys very calmly and coldly. How bright and beautiful God's gifts are! How deeply they should move us.

## APPLICATION.

God has promised me wonderful things. sometimes had to wait long for His blessings, but He has always been true to His Word. He has promised me still more wonderful things. 'Eve hath not seen nor ear heard what GoD hath prepared for them that love Him.' When I think of these words do I laugh in unbelief, or do I laugh for joy? With regard to the past, Isaac is indeed 'Laughter' to me, for was he not the ancestor of the true Isaac, my LORD and SAVIOUR? And with regard to the present, Isaac is indeed 'Laughter' to me, for do not all my spiritual joys come from the blessed Companionship of the Love of IESUS, his descendant after the flesh? And with regard to the future, Isaac will, indeed, always be 'Laughter' to me, for I shall live for ever in the smile of the LORD JESUS. So I have every reason to cultivate the spirit of holy joy and to rejoice in the LORD. wrong ever to have indulged in murmurings, distrust, gloom, and impatience? I am ashamed of my moroseness, my want of joy, for I, too, am a descendant of the true Isaac, I am a child of 'Laughter.'

#### AFFECTION.

O my LORD JESUS! I thank Thee, I praise Thee for the true joy Thou hast brought into the world!

Help me to be like Thee, and grant that I may try to bring joy wherever I go. May I wait patiently for Thy gifts; and may I appreciate them when they come. May my spiritual life bring forth such joy to myself and others that it may indeed be 'spiritual laughter.'

### RESOLUTION.

To cultivate the spirit of holy joy, remembering the words of the Apostle:—

## THOUGHT.

'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the LORD.'

# Hagar.

First Prelude. Picture: Hagar and Ishmael alone in the wilderness.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to inflame my will, that I may meditate upon this history to the good of my soul.

#### Consideration.

The child of bondage and the child of freedom cannot dwell together. The child of the law is sent into the wilderness with only bread and water—the two necessaries of life—whilst the child of the Gospel is kept to feast in the Father's house. How painful it must have been for Abraham to send away Hagar the Egyptian: how terrible to dismiss Ishmael, the son of fifteen years! Nothing short of a Divine command

could justify such a proceeding. And the children of freedom suffered from the children of bondage, even after the separation; for was not Joseph, Abraham's grandson, sold to the Ishmaelites, and were not the Israelites brought into slavery by the nation of Hagar the Egyptian? But, in spite of their rejection, God was gracious to Hagar and Ishmael. He showed them the well in the wilderness, and He made them a great nation. God had told Abraham to give them up, but He took care of them Himself.

### APPLICATION.

The Church and the world cannot live together; which of them am I cherishing in my house and in my heart? The world will mock the Church whenever it has a chance; my business is to serve the Church. The child of the world is the child of bondage; no bondage is so great as that of the world.

The child of the Church is well named 'Laughter,' for its Lord says, 'My yoke is easy and My burden light.' Do I try to get on with both?' Or do I send the world away—away with its loaf and its bottle of water—away into the wilderness? But will not the world pine and die without me? Am I not too important to it to let it go with safety even to itself? Be not afraid; God will take care of it; you cannot serve God and Mammon. God will give it its proper place—a well in the wilderness, a home with the archers, a wife from the Egyptians.

## Affection.

O blessed Father! who takest care of all men, and givest all their duties, I thank Thee that Thou hast called me to have my portion with the children of freedom;

grant that I may do the work that Thou hast given me to do, and strive to please Thee with all my heart: and give me grace to make this—

### RESOLUTION.

To cast out . . . which hinders me from the service of God.

And to remember the words of the LORD:-

### THOUGHT.

' If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.'

# Abraham's Sacrifice.

First Prelude. Picture: Isaac bound; Abraham raising the knife.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O GoD! enlighten my understanding and move my will that I may be able to understand the meaning of this history, and draw from it the lesson of self-sacrifice.

## CONSIDERATION.

The time of prosperity was the time of trial. The child of so many prayers, the child of so many years, is in one moment to be given up and slain by the hand most dear to him. As God the Father gave up God the Son to the terrible death of the Cross, so Abraham gave up Isaac to the wood and the knife. As God the Son gave Himself up willingly, so Isaac went with his father without a word and lay down on the altar of sacrifice. As Jesus bore His Cross, so Isaac bore the wood upon

which he was to suffer. But as the Godhead could not suffer death, though the Lamb of God in His human nature did so, so Isaac was not allowed to die upon the altar, but the ram was accepted in his stead. By this great sacrifice of his son, Abraham consecrated the whole of his race to God, and we, his spiritual descendants, are dedicated to Him wholly and entirely; and God has given to us His only Son to be a glorious Sacrifice for us! O what a wonderful gift! O what a blessed exchange of love tokens!

#### APPLICATION.

Do I realise my entire dedication to God? Do I realise the immense sacrifice God has made for me? Am I ready to give Him anything, and everything He demands? Everything I have, He gave to me, and when He asks for it. He but asks for His own. His: therefore all I have is His. Three days of intense agony Abraham bore; the third day, the day of sacrifice, was the day of deliverance. If I give up all my cherished things to God, He will bring joy out of the sacrifice, and the day of suffering will be transformed into the day of consecration. Every time I take my part in the Sacrifice of the Altar, let me bring what I love best and offer it unto Him. He has provided the Lamb. Let me bring the fire and the wood; the fire of a heart glowing with love, the wood of prayers and meditations which may make that fire to burn. I will go to the mountain in the spirit of sacrifice, and 'In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.'

#### AFFECTION.

O Heavenly Father! Thou hast not withheld Thy Son, Thine only Son, from me; grant that I may not

withhold my fortune, my children, my dearest affections, my life, myself from Thee! Every time I go to Thine Altar let me lay my most precious things at Thy feet, and, in order to do this thoroughly, I make this—

### RESOLUTION.

To offer up my love for such a person, my affection for such a pursuit, entirely to Thee, and to remember what I ought to be.

### THOUGHT.

' A living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.'

# Isaac and Rebekah.

First Prelude. Picture: Evening. Rebekah watering the camels. Isaac meditating in the fields.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, enlighten my understanding and move my will, that I may be able to meditate upon these Thy truths, and draw thence the lessons of the active and the meditative life.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The choice of Abraham's servant was guided by God. He distrusted his own judgment, and asked God to choose for him. How many difficulties would Christians avoid if they placed the everyday and business affairs of life before God—asking His direction! Rebekah went out to draw water. In fulfilling the regular, quiet, everyday duties of her life she met with her great happi-

ness. She was found by her husband's messenger. Eleazar's prayer was answered. Rebekah drew for her home; she drew for the stranger; she drew for the camels; thereby fulfilling three parts of inexhaustible charity—care for the home, hospitality, kindness to animals. As Rebekah found her happiness in active work, so Isaac met his whilst in quiet meditation. He was in the fields thinking upon GoD; and GoD showed him his wife coming to him in the peaceful evening light, and henceforth the active life and the contemplative life were one for evermore.

### APPLICATION.

Am I not often puzzled as to what I ought to do? Am I not tempted to think-If I had only more leisure; if only I were not obliged to spend so much time in mere household duties, in mere routine duties, in mere business duties, I could serve God and meditate upon Him so much better! And then I am tempted to think-If only I had some active work, if I were not so lonely, I could serve God so much better! Let me think upon these two evenings—the evening of activity, the evening of meditation. God sent a blessing to both. Let me accept joyfully whichever lot is assigned to me, and in His good time He will join both together, and then I shall have the perfect life. Only, like Rebekah, I must in my active life first consider home duties, then hospitality, then kindness for every creature; and, like Isaac, I must in my meditative life first go out to meditate, out of every sordid care, and then lift up mine eyes to behold the love of God. And these five things, which make up the number of sacrifice, will consecrate my whole being to Gop.

### AFFECTION.

O Lord my God! I pray Thee to warm my heart with sincere love of Thee, that, like Rebekah, I may be full of an earnest desire to do good to every creature, and that, like Isaac, I may be absorbed and possessed by the contemplation of Thy goodness! Grant that I may pray in work, and work in prayer; that one may never hinder the other, but both be consecrated to Thee. For this end I will make this—

#### RESOLUTION.

Whether praying or working, to expect a message from God. And I will remember these words:—

## THOUGHT.

'Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.'

# Csau's Birthright.

First Prelude. Picture: Esau entreating Jacob for the pottage.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, I entreat Thee to enlighten my understanding and to arouse my will, that I may draw out the full meaning of this history, to Thy glory and the good of my soul.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Esau came in from hunting; he had probably had an unsuccessful day; weary and faint, the mess of pottage—

—the savoury red-lentil broth—attracted his attention. Losing all self-control, he sacrificed the future for the present; a great and lasting good for a momentary relief from suffering. What was the birthright? The headship of the tribe, the priesthood of the family, and the immense privileges promised to the line of Abraham. Esau undervalued these privileges, but perhaps he only half believed in them. In the New Testament he is called a profane person; his brother Jacob believed in and valued them, although he obtained them in a selfish way. Esau's resolution was the work of a moment; a child of impulse, without discipline, without self-denial, he sacrifices the spirit to the flesh, and despises his birthright in the sight of God and man.

### APPLICATION.

I wonder at Esau's conduct, but am I not constantly in danger of doing the same? Nay, have I not done the same? Weary of hunting, weary of trusting GoD for food, do I not long for the savoury things of the world, ready to hand? Am I not ready to seize the pottage of pleasure, the pottage of honour, of worldly consideration—nay, even such a vile thing as the pottage of sloth and self-indulgence? Have I not often thought the future life must take care of itself; it is my business to seize present good? I have done this every time I have preferred worldly pleasure to religious duties; feasting to fasting at the proper times; a frivolous action to a work of mercy.

My birthright is a more glorious one than Esau's. I was born of water and of the Spirit, 'A member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.' Shall I despise it?

### AFFECTION.

O Heavenly Father! I entreat Thee to accept my hearty thanks that Thou hast given me such a glorious birthright, that Thou hast called me to this state of salvation. I pray Thee to give me Thy grace, that I may never be so wicked as to despise it, and grant that no earthly suffering may ever induce me to forfeit it. And here, lest self-indulgence may lead me gradually astray, I will make this—

### RESOLUTION.

That I will deny myself in some one thing every day. And I will remember the words of St. Paul:—

## THOUGHT.

'Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

# Isaac's Sowing and Reaping.

First Prelude. Picture: A sower sowing his seed.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to
enlighten my mind and to rouse my will, that I may
learn from Isaac's sowing and reaping what Thou wouldst
have me to do.

### CONSIDERATION.

Egypt was a land of plenty. Owing to the overflow of the Nile, crops were plentiful in that country when famine reigned everywhere else. Egypt was, therefore,

the refuge of the ancients, the land to which their eyes turned when food failed them. But it was also a country of luxury, a country of idolatry, a land where the true God was forgotten. It was a dangerous land for the servants of the true God. Isaac was forbidden to go there; he was commanded to dwell in the land of Gerar. Isaac not only obeyed the command, but his obedience was so complete, that he sowed corn in the land, which no one would do but an inhabitant thereof. He gave himself up entirely to the will of God, and the consequence was that he received in the same year a hundred-fold, and the Lord blessed him.

### APPLICATION.

Why do I not always succeed in the things I have undertaken? Because they are not begun according to the will of God. God says dwell in this land, and I go down into Egypt because I think I may have things more to my liking, or more to the glory of God. Perhaps I fear danger; but the danger from Abimelech is as nothing to the danger from Pharaoh; perhaps I am restless, and do not think myself properly appreciated; perhaps I move away from the land in which God has commanded me to dwell, because I do not believe in His promises. O let me not be discouraged! Let me not seek another sphere of work, another sphere of suffering, because I am weary waiting for the increase. God can bring a hundredfold out of the bare rock, but it must be when He pleases and where He pleases. Why am I restless? Let me examine into my motives.

## AFFECTION.

O LORD, I thank Thee that Thou hast deigned to give me something to do for Thee; something to suffer

for Thee. Let me sojourn in the land which *Thou* hast chosen for me, happy wherever I may be, as long as Thou art with me and dost bless me.

### RESOLUTION.

To sow in the land where God has placed me, trusting Him entirely for the results.

### THOUGHT.

'Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.'

# The Three Wells.

First Prelude. Picture: The servants of Isaac digging; the herdmen of Gerar watching.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to rouse my will, that I may draw living water from this meditation.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Isaac's greatness excited the fear and envy of Abimelech; he sent him away, not knowing the gentleness and meekness of the peaceful son of Abraham, who departs without saying a word.

He digged a well in the valley; the herdmen of Gerar watched to see whether the water was good, and then claimed it, without having spent any labour upon it. Isaac called the well Esek, or 'contention,' and then moved away from it. He digged another well in a place further off; the herdmen watched him again, and finding that the water was good, they took the well away from him. Isaac named the well Sitnah, or Hatred, and then moved away from it. With patience and perseverance he digged a third well, and the herdmen contended with him no more; and he called it Rehoboth, or Room. What was the consequence of this quietness, this self-renunciation? A vision of the Lord, a triple blessing, a holy altar, and the well called Beersheba, which means the Well of Seven! Sheba meaning Oath and Seven.

## APPLICATION.

I must move away from Contention and Hatred if I would have Room in the land where the LORD has sent When I have found a good thing by my own labour. I think it very hard that I should be robbed of it by those who have only watched me and done nothing themselves. Isaac endured this twice, and would have endured it a third time: fit type of JESUS CHRIST, Who was chased from Bethlehem by a wicked king, and from Nazareth by a violent mob. I cannot bear to be deprived of my rights; I cannot bear to give place unto wrath. If I could only cultivate the true spirit of detachment I should receive the same reward as Isaac—communion with GoD; the threefold joys of GoD's presence, GoD's blessing, and spiritual fruitfulness; the delights of the Altar of GoD; and the spiritual Beersheba, which is the living water of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST! Grant me the true spirit of meekness, that I may neither contend with nor hate

another, but may quietly pass on to an unoccupied place, leaving hatred and contention to the herdmen of Gerar, the children of this world.

#### RESOLUTION.

To leave contention to the contentious, and to trust my cause to God.

## THOUGHT.

When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another.'

# The Reconciliation.

First Prelude. Picture: The King and his two friends approaching Isaac.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to strengthen my will, that I may gain from this meditation the deep longing for a sweet and peaceable disposition.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Abimelech had said unto Isaac, 'Go from us,' and Isaac went without a murmur. In spite of the herdmen of Gerar, Isaac succeeded in everything he did, because the LORD had blessed him, and all around were forced to acknowledge this. When Abimelech saw that Isaac was blessed and prosperous, he came to him and begged for his friendship. He took with him Ahuzzah and

Phichol, his friend and his captain, counsel and arms, and, thus fortified, he sought the peaceful Isaac. When Isaac saw the three coming to him, he asked them why they had come after him, as they had sent him away. When they asked for his friendship, he not only gave it them, but he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. It was full, free, and perfect forgiveness; he not only forgave them, but he lavished his good things upon them.

#### APPLICATION.

When I have been slighted, abandoned, insulted, turned out of my own, and circumstances have changed, and prosperity has overtaken me, and others have courted me, what has been my feeling towards those who once behaved ill to me? Probably something like this: 'They slighted me when I was badly off and thought to be nobody. I do not care now for their attentions, they may depart without my friendship.' And what has my Lord done for me, who refused so long to listen to His voice, and turned Him out of my heart? He not only accepted my repentance, but took me to His home and made me a feast—fine flour of wheat and the chalice of red wine. Let me learn from Isaac the joy of a peaceful and generous heart; let me learn from Jesus the overflowing love which delights in feasting the penitent.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD, I worship and honour Thee for the love with which Thou hast welcomed my repentance; save me from all meanness and baseness of spirit, and grant that I may be full of loving-kindness and generosity.

### RESOLUTION.

Not only to forgive, but to give.

### THOUGHT.

'Forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask.'

# The Two Blessings.

First Prelude. Picture: The bow and arrows of a hunter and the crook of a shepherd—contrast.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to arouse my will, that I may meditate rightly upon the blessings of Isaac and the faith of his sons.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. The flesh and the spirit carrying on a war, each trying to supplant the other. Isaac and Rebekah had waited twenty years for Esau and Jacob, and now when they had grown to the prime of life their presence was war. It had been revealed to Rebekah that the elder should serve the younger. This must have been a trial to Isaac. He was a loving, peaceable man, anxious that everything should go on in its accustomed channel, not likely to place his younger son above the elder. His blindness rendered Rebekah's schemes practicable. Rebekah's impatience ruined present happiness; but both carried out the will of God. Esau had sold his birthright, he was therefore unworthy of the blessing, but he had the

blessing he could understand and appreciate; he had chosen earthly things, and the fatness of earth was promised him, the dew of heaven afterwards; whilst to Jacob, who had chosen heavenly things, the dew of heaven was promised first and then the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine.

### APPLICATION.

Have I sold my birthright for a mess of pottage, and do I come now claiming the blessing? Heavenly things are only obtained by heavenly minds. The mess of pottage sufficed me long ago, and now I must put up with the blessing of Esau and take the second place. Lentils may do for Esau, but corn and wine for Jacob. Which do I long for? The pleasures of the world, or the joys of the sacraments? O may I choose the highest path now, or the time will come when at the last day I shall cry with an exceeding great and bitter cry, 'Bless me, even me also, O my FATHER;' and I shall cry in vain.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD, grant, I beseech Thee, that my spirit may overcome the flesh, and that I may so value my birthright that I may inherit the blessing.

## RESOLUTION.

To prefer spiritual privileges to earthly advantages.

#### THOUGHT.

'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.'

# The Kaired of Esau.

First Prelude. Picture. Esau watching Jacob amongst the tents.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to rouse my will, that I may learn the sinfulness of all hatred, envy, and jealousy, and guard against the first appearance of them in my heart.

### CONSIDERATION.

Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him. He was a fit ancestor of Herod, who hated Jesus because of the blessing wherewith His Father had blessed Him. Both tried to get rid of their rivals; both were apparently successful; both failed in the end. Esau never takes the blame to himself. He remembers not his recklessness in parting with his birthright, but he looks forward to revenge; and he shows the hardness of his heart by wishing to make the day of mourning the day of blood. He looks forward with joy to bringing a double grief upon the head of his mother. He is only saved from the sin of Cain by the forethought and prudence of Rebekah in sending her favourite son away—as she thought—for a few days; but, as it afterwards proved, for many years.

## APPLICATION.

When I have, by my own fault, lost a privilege, do I hate the person who has obtained it instead of me? Do

I try to do him some injury? Do I wish to prevent him from reaping the whole benefit of it? Instead of blaming myself for my heedlessness, sloth, carelessness, and stupidity, and being thankful that somebody else has had the grace to value what I have despised, I fear I have too often allowed a dislike of that person to grow up within my heart. It may be that I have let slip a great chance of getting on in life, and that another has made use of it; it may be that I have undervalued a means of spiritual health, and another has stepped in before me; it may be that I have missed an opportunity of doing good, and that another has seized it and reaped the blessing. Is there any hatred in my heart on account of this, and, if so, what am I doing to check it?

### AFFECTION.

O dear Lord Jesus, Fountain of Love, let me not have part with Thine enemies. Let me have no fellowship with Esau or Herod, those fierce princes of Edom, but may I meekly accept the consequences of my faults, and take all the blame to myself.

## RESOLUTION.

To act and speak kindly to . . . . who has supplanted me.

#### Тноисит.

'Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer.'

# Jacob's Ladder.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob asleep. The angels ascending and descending.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to inflame my will, that from this meditation I may learn the lesson of trust in Thee.

## CONSIDERATION.

The lonely one, sent away by his father, hated by his brother, going to a strange land and to unknown relations. Stones were his pillows, the setting sun his companion. But as the message from God to Abraham came in the darkness, so the message from GoD to Jacob came in the darkness. The ladder was set up and the top of it reached to Heaven, and the angels of GoD ascended and descended on it. The LORD stood above it and gave Jacob His blessing. He carried away with him his earthly father's blessing; but now, to comfort him in his loneliness, he has his Heavenly Father's blessing. No longer surrounded by friends and relations, he has the company of the angels. Alone in the world, he has the promise that in his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed; and the ladder between himself and Heaven is the emblem of Christ, Who brings the supernatural close to the natural, and is the way between earth and Heaven.

#### APPLICATION.

How little I know what is good for me! How often do I mourn over a change which seems to me a most undeserved misfortune, and all the time it has been the means of bringing me nearer to God. It was necessary for me to be brought away from Beersheba, the Well of Promise, towards Haran, the Mountain of Trial, and first to the 'certain place,' the place of proving, which has no name, because it is different to each person. In my lone-liness, there I find the ladder reaching to Heaven, and the angel-messengers; God above all; and the spoken blessing, a blessing beyond all my hopes. What matter if the sun has set, and I have only the stones of that place for pillows? If I can only hear my Lord say, 'I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of;' then 'I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.'

## AFFECTION '

O dear LORD JESUS, abide with me, and the stones will be soft pillows, and the desert will blossom as the rose, and Heaven will be brought close to earth. Thy love is greater than that of father, mother, or brother: a home in Thy heart is more than all the tents of Isaac, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

### RESOLUTION.

To go out to the mountain with a cheerful heart, looking always for a great blessing after a great trial.

## THOUGHT.

'Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

# Bethel.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob pouring oil on the stone.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to move my will, that I may study the ways of Thy Providence with a watchful eye, and sanctify every place where I meet Thy Love.

### CONSIDERATION.

Jacob awoke to the presence of God. 'Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not.' His sorrow, his loneliness, have passed away; his love, his gratitude remain. He takes trouble and pains to testify to the presence of God. He takes the stone he had slept on, and consecrates it to God. He takes oil from his store, perhaps the scanty store of his own provision of food for the journey; and as St. Mary Magdalen poured hers upon the Living Altar, he pours his upon the altar of stone. But not only does the past receive his gratitude, and the present his exertions; the future receives his promises. He vows a vow, and he promises to build a House of God, and he dedicates his tithes. And to do all this 'he rose up early in the morning.'

## APPLICATION.

When God has blessed me, coming to visit me in my affliction, turning my sorrow into joy, what do I think,

say, do? Am I ashamed of not sooner recognising His presence? Do I acknowledge, in words of thanksgiving, the wonderful help and joy He has given me? Do I take trouble to sanctify places and things to Him, not because He has need of them, but to show forth my gratitude? The Stone of Sorrow, the Oil of Peace, both belong to Him; but it is a privilege to me to acknowledge the fact, and to show it forth by a dedication to Him. The Land which belongs to Him He has given to me: the stones, and the oil, and the tithes I offer back to Him. He gives the greater to me, I offer Him part of the lesser; but by doing so I acknowledge the fact that everything I have is from Him.

### AFFECTION.

O LORD GOD, open my eyes that I may see and acknowledge Thy presence. Let me never have to say, 'Surely the LORD was in this place, and I knew it not,' but grant that Thy House may indeed be to me the Gate of Heaven, and let the oil of peace ever fall upon the stone of sorrow.

### RESOLUTION.

To expect to meet GoD in His House, the Church, and to love to make my offerings there.

#### THOUGHT.

'LORD, I have loved the habitation of Thy House, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.'

# The Sheep and the Well.

First Prelude. Picture: Three flocks waiting by the well.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O dear LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to strengthen my will, that I may draw from this meditation a keen desire for Thy living water, and a great longing to impart it to others.

### CONSIDERATION.

In the land of the people of the East, three flocks were waiting for the stone to be rolled away from the mouth of the well; but the stone could not be rolled away until Rachel had brought her flock. In the hand of the Son of Righteousness three great historic Churches are, with their offshoots, waiting for the abundance of the Living Water—the Greek, the Latin, the Anglican; but the fulness of joy cannot be received until Rachel has brought up her flock, until the children of Israel acknowledge their Saviour. Jacob wanted to send the three flocks away that he might have his interview with Rachel in private; but the flocks were to wait one for the other. No true joy can take place until all are gathered together. The first kindness Jacob showed Rachel was to water her father's sheep; the best service we can render Our LORD is to bring the living water to others.

#### APPLICATION.

I am often inclined to be selfish in spiritual things; I like to have the well to myself, I like to talk with Rachel

alone. But who am I, that I should have more privileges than others? I must wait until the other sheep come up. I must wait until all the flocks be gathered together. Have I not often been in a selfish hurry? Have I not often made my convenience the first object? Have I not been over-anxious for a good place in church, for the first turn in spiritual privileges, not considering that others have waited longer than I have—that their souls are of quite as much consequence as mine? Jacob wished to hurry the others, that he might be the only one to greet Rachel at the well; I often wish to be first as he wished to be last, and from a much more selfish motive—that others may serve me, not that I may serve others. And what haste I am in to see the fulness of blessing imparted to the Church! I seem to think it a disgrace to myself if the Church of which I am a child is not fully watered; forgetting that all the flocks must be gathered together before the fulness of joy can be received by all.

## AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS, Thou good Shepherd of the sheep, gather us all together close to the waters of life; make us all to rejoice in each other's happiness and refreshment, reunite all who love Thee, and grant that all the flocks may be gathered together and be made one flock under one Shepherd.

## RESOLUTION.

To do all I can, in every particular, for the reunion of Christendom, and the gathering in of Israel.

## THOUGHT.

'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

# Jeah and Rachel.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob at work amongst Laban's flocks.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to inflame my will, that by the help of this meditation I may bring forth the fruits of labour and patience.

### CONSIDERATION.

Jacob desired to make Rachel his wife, and diligently served for her seven years. The delight of pure wisdom is only to be obtained by diligent toil. The heights of perfection are gained by the ladder of the saints. The seven works of mercy may gain Leah and her fruitfulness; the voice of the preacher may bring forth spiritual children; but Rachel and her preciousness must be served for yet another seven years, and these seven years, as St. Augustine saith, may be poverty of spirit, meekness, mourning, hunger and thirsting after righteousness, mercifulness, purity, peacefulness. Jacob served for Rachel and was given Leah, but the less precious was the more fruitful of the two, and Leah bore seven children, and amongst them was Judah, the founder of the Royal line of David and the ancestor of Jesus Christ.

#### APPLICATION.

By setting my affections upon the higher, I may gain the higher and the lower also. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' By working patiently and accepting the lower, I may in due time attain to the higher. The contemplative life is the more beautiful; the active life is the more fruitful. God keeps me waiting for the one until I have fulfilled my duties to the other. How am I fulfilling these duties? Is my life a life of labour and patience, or do I consider that I ought to have everything I wish directly I long for it? Perhaps I consider myself fit for high things when God knows that I am only fit for common things. Do I think that I know better than God?

## AFFECTION.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast toiled so long for me, grant that I may never think any toil long for Thee. As Jacob longed for Rachel, so may my soul long for Thee; and though I must pass through the cares of the world to attain to Thee, yet will the seven years of service seem but a few days for the love I have to Thee.

#### RESOLUTION.

To persevere in quiet labour, knowing that God promises are sure.

### THOUGHT.

'For ye have need of patience, that after ye have don the will of GoD, ye might receive the promise.

# The Children of Jacob.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob praying amid the flocks.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation the wonderful progress of those who love Thee.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The names of Jacob's wives and children are full of suggestions. Leah, though full of good works, is 'wearied.' Rachel, the precious 'ewe' lamb, gives forth nothing for many years. Though Zilpah, 'dropping' blessings, brings forth 'good fortune' in Gad and 'happiness' in Asher, yet' modesty' Bilhah alone brings forth, a 'right judgment' in Dan and a 'likeness' to God in Naphtali. Jacob's sons in a parable show the progress of the Christian life First comes Reuben, 'the vision of the son of GoD; 'then Simeon, the 'hearing' and obeying of His will; then Levi, the being 'held' or associated with Him. Then follows Judah, for the heart bursts into 'praise' of the LORD; and Dan 'judgment,' and Naphtali 'likeness,' come afterwards in due order. Gad, 'good fortune:' Asher, 'happiness;' Issachar, 'work for God,' which 'brings' the true 'wages;' Zabulon, a 'habitation' with God, lead up to Joseph, 'He shall add' works of blessing to others; and all culminate in Benjamin, the son of the Right Hand, the enjoyment of the presence of GoD; whilst Dinah, the only daughter, is 'judged,' vindicating the principle of the justice of GoD.

#### APPLICATION.

The tree is known by its fruits. What kind of fruit do I bear? When I have seen the vision of the Son of God, am I careful to obey His voice? Do I wish to be associated with Him? Do I praise God in all I have to do? Is my happiness, my blessedness, to be with Him, and to make my habitation among the godly—having first sought for true judgment and likeness to God, and engaging myself to work for Him only? My life should be a continual progress, a continual giving forth until I get to my last but one, my best beloved, Joseph, the adding to the increase of the joys of others, and then my actions become those of the son of the Right Hand, whilst the calm mind looks on, tracing the Hand of the Almighty. Is this my aim and object? Or is my life a jumble—a scene of self-satisfied confusion?

#### Affection.

O LORD, I thank Thee for all the blessings Thou hast given me. May I see Thy Almighty hand in all the events of my life, and, as new blessings and new duties crowd around me, may my will be joined entirely to Thine.

### RESOLUTION.

To make every blessing a step heavenwards.

#### THOUGHT.

'All things serve Thee.'

Note.—For the observation upon Dinah the writer is indebted to  $Mr_{\bullet}$  Jukes in his 'Types in Genesis.'

# The Riches of Jacob.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob going forth with his flocks and his herds.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may look upon all worldly things as means of discipline, or as signs of Thy love and favour.

#### CONSIDERATION.

By diligent service, all Laban's riches came by degrees into the possession of Jacob. Laban's daughters, his servants, his flocks, his herds, came into the hands of the poor wayfarer who had watered Rachel's sheep at the well when he first came amongst his kindred. What was the reason? Jacob worshipped the true God in the midst of ignorance and idolatry. Like his grandfather Abraham, his heart kept true to Jehovah. He did not get tainted with the imperfect and semi-idolatrous worship which he saw going on around him; and so, in spite of many faults, many returns of the old spirit of deception, God acknowledged him and gave him the sign of favour promised in the Old Testament—temporal prosperity.

#### APPLICATION.

Am I acknowledging GoD in the midst of a perverse generation? In the midst of half beliefs, and wrong beliefs, and no beliefs, are the promises of my GoD dear

to me? Do I keep steadfast in the midst of my earthly journey, as Jacob kept steadfast during the twenty years he spent in the tents of the stranger? Perhaps I do, and God has given me sons, and daughters, and servants, and flocks, and herds. Let me take them as tokens of His blessing, and be ready to give them up at any moment. Perhaps I am steadfast to God, and He gives me none of these things: let me not fear, I shall have them spiritually. Spiritual sons and daughters, children I have taught and brought up in faith: good thoughts, good works, labours and sacrifices. All these things are more than sons and daughters, more than servants and riches, more than herds and flocks. O God, make me a true Jacob, that I may carry off abundant treasures from the world, which changes my wages ten times, and deceives me whenever it can.

#### AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS CHRIST! May I never serve Thee for aught but Thyself! Thou art more to me than children, and servants, and riches; more than glory and fame; more than kindred and family. LORD, may it ever be so!

#### RESOLUTION.

To wish for nothing—to despise nothing.

## THOUGHT.

'By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.'

## Mizpah.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob setting up a stone.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation to cultivate the spirit of watchfulness.

## CONSIDERATION.

What a contrast between Jacob's first pillar of stone and the last! What a contrast between Bethel and Mizpah! At Bethel the promise had been given; at Mizpah the promise had been fulfilled. At Bethel the stone became the House of God, at Mizpah the stone became the Watch Tower. When Jacob was alone and poor, he had need only of the House of God, one stone to pour oil upon, one stone for an altar. When Jacob returned with his multitude of souls and of riches, he had need not only of a stone to offer sacrifice upon the Mount, but he had need of a Watch Tower between himself and the land where he had gained his riches; he had need of a 'witness' between himself and Laban; he had need of a line of separation between his country and Padan-Aram.

#### APPLICATION.

The more prosperous I am, the more watchful I should be. The richer I am, the more cautious I should be not to let the spirit of the world grow in me. Mizpah must be built and dedicated with solemn sacrifice upon

the Mount, a testimony against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The heap of stones for a witness, the pillar for sacrifice. Both must be built together—watchfulness and prayer. Have I built these two guardians, or have I forgotten them and returned triumphant, enjoying my riches temporal or spiritual, as the case may be, without the fear and trembling of the true servant of God? It is well for me if I have learnt to build the Pillar and the Tower.

## AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS CHRIST, I thank Thee that Thou hast of Thy great mercy given me two such safeguards. I love Thee for teaching me how to make use of them, and I pray Thee that I may never relax in my vigilance, nor doubt the power of sacrifice.

## RESOLUTION.

To be more particular about Vigils and Communions.

THOUGHT.

'Watch and pray.'

# Jacob's Return.

First Prelude. Picture: The flocks of Jacob, the spears of Esau.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may learn by meditating on this history how to behave in times of danger.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The angels of God met Jacob and formed a camp on each side of him. The Heavenly Father protected him from his earthly brother. Fear, however, reigned in the heart of Jacob, for he knew how Esau had been waiting long years for revenge. The four hundred spears of Edom were coming against the peaceful procession of Israel. Jacob was full of anxiety, not for himself, but for the souls in his charge. He neglected nothing to ensure their safety. He first addressed himself to God and then to man. He addresses himself to GoD with the most thorough acknowledgment of owing everything to His bounty; he tells Him of his fears with the most touching confidence. He then turns to his brother and seeks for reconciliation, grudging no worldly goods, in order to make that reconciliation easy.

#### APPLICATION.

I am in danger from many enemies, spiritual and temporal. How do I behave in times of danger? Do I trust in my own strength? Do I neglect precautions? Do I cling to my worldly possessions, instead of being ready to sacrifice them for the good of others? Am I willing to be reconciled to my brother by gentleness and good offices? A camp of angels may be on my right hand and on my left, and yet my own obstinacy or sloth may render God's goodness useless in my behalf. His help must be sought for with the most intense humility, and my brother must be addressed with kindness and with presents—with things that he can understand—goats, and sheep, and camels, and kine. Let me not grudge him these temporal things because spiritual gifts are beyond him.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD, I thank Thee for the help Thou hast given me, for the camps of angels, for the watchfulness of Thy love preparing me for the contest. Give me the strength of prayerfulness, gentleness, and generosity.

## RESOLUTION.

To tell my griefs to GoD first, and then to do my best.

## THOUGHT.

'There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'

## Peniel.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob wrestling with the Angel.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to illumine my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may learn from this conflict the power of prayer.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Jacob won his father Isaac's blessing by deceit. He was to win his Heavenly Father's blessing by a fearful hand-to-hand struggle—alone, and at night. All he loved had passed over the brook before him—he was left alone with the awful spiritual power. His patience, his gentleness, his generosity, had all been tried; now his strength and resolution were to be called forth. All night the struggle continued; at last the supernatural vanquished

the natural, and Jacob received the mark of the struggle. In return for his lameness he received the blessing, the spiritual for the temporal, the heavenly for the earthly. In return for his solitude he saw the Face of God.

#### APPLICATION.

As my spiritual life progresses my efforts must be stronger and stronger. When Jacob left his father's house with only his staff, he had sweet dreams of the angels. When he returned with two bands he had to prove his strength in a fearful wrestling-match. When I went forth into the spiritual life with only the staff of GoD's grace, I had sweet drawings of grace and great spiritual joys; when I return with 'two bands,' the spiritual and temporal blessings that grace has won for me—experience, works of mercy, spiritual children, influence—I must dare to send all I love across the brook, I must dare to wrestle spiritually all night. Have I ever done this? Or have my efforts decreased with age and prosperity?

## Affection.

O LORD GOD, I entreat Thee leave me not; I look for Thee alone. Thy blessing is to be sought with energy and courage; give me strength to fight the good fight of faith. I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.

#### RESOLUTION.

To pray more earnestly.

### THOUGHT.

'The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

## The Sonours of Jacob.

First Prelude. Picture: The altar at Shalem.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to illumine my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may learn by this meditation what are the true honours, and how I should receive them.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Jacob received honours from God, and he raised an altar to God. Man receives honours from man, and he raises an altar to the world—power. Jacob was accepted by God. Jacob received a name from God. Jacob became the heir to the land. What does he do in return? At the very first opportunity he raises an altar in the very first parcel of land he can call his own; and in return for being named Israel, the Prince of God, he calls Jehovah God—the God of Israel. The higher God elevates him, the higher he raises his thought of God, the more he appropriates Him and acknowledges His awful majesty. Jacob buys a home in the land, but it is no home to him until he erects there an altar.

## APPLICATION.

How do I receive the honours God has been pleased to send me? Do I turn from them and look only for worldly honours. He has made me a prince in His sight. He has given me greater honours than those of Jacob, for has He not made me a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven? Perhaps I have bought a field, perhaps I have spread a tent, perhaps I have built a house, perhaps I have founded a family. Am I looking for an earthly title? Am I striving for worldly precedence? Or am I content to be a prince before God, and to glory in the name of my baptism? Does the thought of God's benefits rouse me to acknowledge Him as my God, and to build Him an altar? Have I built Him a church on my estate? Have I given Him an oratory in my house? Have I furnished Him a shrine in my heart?

#### AFFECTION.

O God of my heart, I acknowledge Thee as my God, my only Lord. Nothing is good until offered to Thee, nothing is holy until dedicated to Thee. I would rather be homeless than have a palace without Thee. Oh, may my first thought be how to honour Thee duly!

RESOLUTION.

To honour God before all.

THOUGHT.

'Them that honour Me, I will honour.'

## Renewal.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob hiding the idols and gold rings under the oak.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to move my will, that I may put away everything which is displeasing in Thy sight.

#### CONSIDERATION.

An act of treachery and murder led to robbery of a friendly city, idolatry, and covetousness. The cruelty of Simeon and Levi made Jacob's household familiar with the gold and the idols of Shechem. The sin of some brings misery to all. In the midst of the consternation caused by the treachery of his sons, God calls Jacob once more to Bethel—his starting-point. The House of God was to be his refuge, the promise was to be renewed; but, first of all, the idols were to be put away, the cleansing was to take place, the garments were to be changed. Then does Jacob respond to the call; then were they to arise and go up to Bethel.

#### APPLICATION.

After a great sin, an immediate return must be sought. I have sinned often and often against light and knowledge. May I return with all my heart; but in order to do this I must return in God's way. There are five things to be done—putting away the sin, cleansing the

conscience, gaining the white robe, rising from evil surroundings, going up to the House of God; then I may, by the grace of God, be able to attain to His altar. I must bury my idols and put away my ill-gotten gains; the accursed thing must trouble me no more, it must be dead and buried. So may I return again to my happy starting-point, and God's name shall be twice upon it, where before it was only once.

#### AFFECTION.

O God, I mourn that I have ever offended Thee; I pray Thee to take away from me everything which tends to idolatry and avarice; I desire to possess nothing but Thee, to worship no one beside Thee, my God and my LORD.

#### RESOLUTION.

To shrink from no sacrifice when GoD calls me.

#### THOUGHT.

'Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings.'

# The Kouse of God.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob consecrating the stone Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may learn by meditating on this history the meaning of true dedication to Thee.

### CONSIDERATION.

The beginning and the end. Before Jacob went to Padan-Aram, he worshipped in this place, and dedicated it to God. When he returned from Padan-Aram, he again dedicated his altar to God, pouring upon it oil and wine; the oil of peace and the wine of joy. Happy are they who begin and end all their journeys and all their schemes in the House of God. He goes away a young man poor and lonely; he returns in full age with wives and children, flocks and herds, servants and riches. And yet, though his circumstances have changed so much, his offerings to GoD are just the same,—the stone, the wine, the oil, the heartfelt dedication. He had given all, he had no more to give. Jacob the exile offers oil and wine; Israel the Prince offers oil and wine, and God accepts the offering, and GoD renews the blessing.

#### APPLICATION.

Jacob pours oil and wine upon a stone. My God pours oil and wine upon my stony heart. The oil of the Holy anointing of His Spirit, the wine of joy and yet of Holy sadness, the wine of the blood of Christ; they have been poured upon a stone, but that stone is consecrated to Him, and He can soften it with His grace. God gives Jacob the blessing, and Jacob offers wine and oil; God gives the oil and wine, shall I not praise and bless Him? After each favour from God Jacob's devotion grows stronger; God showers His favours upon me and I hardly take the trouble to breathe a thanksgiving. God promised Jacob that kings should descend from him; God has allowed me to call the King of the Church my Brother, and Himself, the Lord of all, my Father.

Where is my offering? Where are my praises?

#### AFFECTION.

O God of my life! may I learn what true dedication means. May I begin and end every action, every journey, every plan in Thy House. May each blessing from Thee draw forth a renewed offering from me.

#### RESOLUTION.

To thank GoD for each blessing as it occurs, and not to presume upon past favours, nor rest upon bygone acts of devotion.

#### THOUGHT.

'Unto Thee, O God, do we give thanks; yea, unto Thee do we give thanks.'

## The Forrow of Jacob.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob at Rachel's grave. Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may be helped in this meditation to understand and to profit by the uses of sorrow.

#### CONSIDERATION.

All Jacob's wishes seemed to be accomplished; he returned to his native land rich, great, and honoured, with abundant offspring and much domestic affection. The dreaded meeting with his fierce brother was over; the

blessing of Jehovah was renewed and confirmed to him; he was going home to his father triumphant. Suddenly his beloved Rachel is called away from him. The faithful companion of so many years of trial is taken just when she would have rejoiced in the overflow of his prosperity. She was never to reach the earthly home they had so often looked forward to; she was never to be brought to her earthly father—Isaac. The son so longed for had been named by his mother the son of sorrow; by his father he was called the son of prosperity, so closely are sorrow and prosperity allied.

## APPLICATION.

Do I expect things to go smoothly with me? Do I look for uninterrupted prosperity? If I do, I may be very sure that a check is coming. Perhaps I have worked hard for many years and never seen any fruit from my labours, and at last success has come. I have rejoiced in that success, and have looked round for one to share it with me-perhaps the one who shared all my trials; and that one has passed away. What is the lesson I must learn from this? I must learn that the son of prosperity is the son of sorrow; I must learn that Benoni and Benjamin are the same upon earth; that joy and sorrow are so closely intermingled that I can scarcely ever have joy without sorrow. In heaven the joy will be entire and eternal, but here I have no continuing city; I must never be sure of wife, or home, or father; I may mark my sorrow with a stone, but I must journey on beyond the watch-tower of Edar.

#### AFFECTION.

O God, Thou art my God, whatever may befall me! Nothing can separate me from Thee! Wife, children, flocks and herds may all be taken away, but the altar and the covenant remain between me and Thee for ever. I thank Thee, O my Gop!

### RESOLUTION.

To advance spiritually, whatever temporal checks I may sustain.

#### THOUGHT.

'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt Thou refresh me.'

## The Death of Isaac.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob and Esau at the grave of their father.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O God, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may learn how to draw fruit from this meditation, and to honour Thee in life and in death.

### CONSIDERATION.

Jacob returned to his father in time to see him die, in time to bury him. The two brothers, rivals and enemies once, were reunited at the grave of their father. Isaac in his old age looks round for his peaceful homeloving son; he is away from him, separated by the deceit of Rebekah, the hatred of Esau, his own grasping disposition. These were all overruled, and made to carry

out Jehovah's will; but they were none the less sinful in themselves. Isaac in his old age, deprived of his younger son, is left weak and blind to the care of the fierce and warlike Esau. Rebekah has been called away: she was not spared to welcome home her favourite son. What memories must have crowded into the minds of both brothers when they met at their father's grave! How much to regret in the past! How much to repent of!

#### APPLICATION.

In family rivalries, in family disputes, am I selfishly led away by the feeling of the moment, or do I look forward to the time when death—my own death, or that of others-will make all these things either of no importance, or perhaps subjects of bitter remorse? Perchance, after many years of misunderstanding, I meet near relations at a funeral, or by the side of a grave. In a moment the tide of feeling rushes over the heart, and the past is regretted, and quarrels are repented of. A little forethought might have prevented all this. may indeed say, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob,' but let Jacob once call to mind the dark days which are surely in the future, and he will neither vex his father nor irritate his brother. Let me think over my own feelings, and hasten to glorify God by being at peace with all men, that I may have nothing to reproach myself with when death lavs his hands upon me or those I love.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD, I entreat Thee that every loss, every funeral, may be a lesson to me, a call to greater holiness, a step upward; and grant that I may have no cause for the misery of remorse when those I love are laid to rest.

#### RESOLUTION.

Whenever I am angry or selfish, to picture myself, or those I would injure, dead.

#### THOUGHT.

'So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.'

# The Separation of Esau and Jacob.

First Prelude. Picture: Esau's long caravan departing for Mount Seir.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may gain knowledge and resolution from this meditation. and learn what Thou wouldst have me to do.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The two Banners are displayed—the Banner of the World, and the Banner of the Church. Esau had conquered Edom and was about to dwell in it; a future of war, of excitement, of rapine, lay before him; from that time forth, Edom has been a fear and a terror, the cradle of the Mussulman, the scourge of the Church. When the two brothers parted, how little they knew that, in the far-off ages, the Idumean Herod would sit as king in Jerusalem, mocking and tormenting the real King, the descendant according to the flesh of the mild and

peaceable Jacob! Esau and Jacob in the course of centuries beheld as their descendants Herod and Jesus! Jacob, with all his faults, is determined to dwell in the land of his father's sojournings, the land of the covenant, the land which God had promised him: Esau is determined to carve out his fortune for himself, and to dwell in the land he has conquered. The fear of God is the motive power of the one; self-will the motive power of the other.

### APPLICATION.

Which Banner have I chosen to follow? The Banner that leads to Mount Seir, or the Banner that leads to Mount Sion? The World or the Church? True, the choice has been made for me in my baptism, but I may ratify it or reject it. Is my will right with God's will? Am I seeking a vocation, an occupation, a reputation which He does not choose me to have? Am I longing for movement, excitement, conquest; or am I content, with quiet patience, to dwell in the Land of Promise? Upon my course now may depend not only my own future but the future of my earthly or my spiritual children. A will one with GoD's will, a heart right with GoD, makes all clear, all easy; if this main principle be firm and steadfast, all the events of life, all the little accidents of position, means, occupations, pleasures, and duties, will arrange themselves and fall into their proper places.

#### AFFECTION.

O God, Thou art my God! Let me not swerve one moment from Thee! Let me follow Thy Banner wherever it may lead me! Never let me think for one moment of my own interest, my own will; let me only think of Thy glory.

## RESOLUTION.

In every circumstance of life, to think what is the will of God. Not—'What do I wish?'

### THOUGHT.

'Choose ye whom ye will serve.'

# The Envy of Joseph's Brethren.

First Prelude. Picture: Ten men gazing with hatred upon one innocent youth.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten mine eyes and to strengthen my will, that I may meditate profitably on the envy of Joseph's brethren, and learn to know and avoid this sin.

#### CONSIDERATION.

A pure life brings forth envy on the part of those who are leading an impure life. Great love calls forth hatred from those who are not so loved. Joseph, the innocent lad, the eldest child of the beloved Rachel, was, by his gentleness, his purity, his spiritual life, a constant reproach to his rough and unspiritual elder brethren. The envy had probably been lurking in their hearts for many years; and when Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colours (a garment of rich colours sewn together in very small pieces, thereby showing great pains in its making) it may have been not only a special favour, but a sign that he was to

be the head of the family instead of Reuben, whose sin had perhaps forfeited that position. They hated him and shewed that they hated him, and, like the terrible hatred of Cain towards Abel, they showed it first by the tongue. They could not speak peaceably unto him.

### APPLICATION.

This sin of envy brings forth hatred; hatred brings forth sins of the tongue. Am I envying any Joseph? Do I dislike some one whose life is better, purer, nobler than my own; some one who is innocent and unsuspicious of evil; some one who is deeply loved, some one whose disposition is a contrast to my own; some one who, though far younger than myself, and possessing far less of the wisdom of the world, has been clothed in a coat of many colours, and set above me in high places? If I am thus envious, why am I so? Why have I fallen from the high estate I might have had? Am I to neglect my Heavenly Father and to sin against Him, and then expect the highest place? Do I envy spiritual gifts? If, as St. Bernard says, the coat of many colours means spiritually the varied gifts of the Holy Ghost, I have them not because I deserve them not. How often my harsh words proceed from harsh thoughts and my harsh thoughts from the evil spirit of envy!

#### AFFECTION.

O Lord my God, cast out of me the evil spirits of envy and anger! Let me not think or speak evil of any one for fear I should speak evil of one of Thy friends, perchance of Thy favourite child. If I have fewer privileges than others, let me know that it is my own fault. I have not been worthy of them.

#### RESOLUTION.

To take the lower place as a matter of course, and so to check the first rising of envy.

### THOUGHT.

'He knew that for envy they had delivered Him.'

# Joseph's Dreams.

First Prelude. Picture: An upright sheaf; eleven prostrate around it.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my understanding and to strengthen my will, that I may meditate profitably upon this history, and draw from it hope and encouragement.

## CONSIDERATION.

Joseph's dream of the sheaves was doubtless sent to him by God as an encouragement and a consolation in the midst of his brethren's unkindness and contempt. The innocent mind is fit for revelations from the Most High, and finds its greatest solace in communion with the world above. Joseph had to work in the fields with his brethren, and probably he heard not one kind word all day; but at night his Heavenly Father revealed to him his future glory, and the triumph of good over evil, though the evil seemed so much stronger. His first dream being treated with hatred and contempt by his brethren, another dream still more emphatic was sent to him, as if to confirm the prophecy of the first, and he was made to announce

it to his kinsfolk, in order that they might remember it in the time to come.

#### APPLICATION.

The day is sometimes dark and dreary, but the night is my own, and, if I lead an innocent life, will be full of the visions of God. How often I am discouraged by the strength of evil and evil-doers. Not only is the world full of injustice and evil-speaking, but the Church also. The forces of evil seem like ten to one, and the ten so much stronger, so much wiser, than the one. Benjamin has not yet grown big enough to help me, and the ten older and stronger are all against me. But who is on my side? The fruitfulness of the earth and the glory of heaven, all the sheaves and all the stars; for there is to be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The vision of future glory can sustain the weakest Christian under the trials of false brethren: is my life so devoted to GoD as to deserve the vision?

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, the innocent Joseph was truly but a type of Thee! Thou wert surrounded on every side as he was, found fault with, spoken harshly to, called not only a dreamer but a blasphemer; help me to a portion of Thy humility and Thy innocence, and may I look forward to the vision of Thy Glory!

### RESOLUTION.

To look forward, instead of brooding over the present and the past.

#### Тнопсит.

'Truly my hope is even in Thee.'

# Joseph's Search for his Brethren.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph looking for the shepherds and the sheep in the fields of Shechem.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to strengthen my will, that I may learn the true meaning of this search, and be ready to answer to Thy call.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Whilst his brethren were full of black thoughts and envy towards Joseph, he was made the messenger of his father's kindness towards them. He was sent to see whether they prospered, for they were near an enemy's country; whether it was well with them. Joseph's faithfulness here comes into prominence, for when he found they were no longer in Shechem he did not return to his father with the excuse that he had only sent him so far; but he found out where they had gone, and went after them to Dothan, twelve miles to the north. Instead of being softened by this conduct, they conspired against him even before he came near to them; and the envy and hatred they had indulged in brought forth the dark plot of murder and lies.

## APPLICATION.

JESUS CHRIST, the Saviour of the world, was sent by His Father with a message of mercy. He walked through the fields searching for his brethren. He followed them afar, and all the return for His love was-' They conspired against Him to slay Him.' What part or lot have I in this matter? My Saviour is looking for His shepherds and His sheep. He is anxious to know if it is well with them close to the enemy's country. He is looking for me. How am I responding to the call? Am I overjoyed at the sound of His voice? Am I grateful for His care, or am I conspiring against Him? Am I stifling CHRIST in the pit of my sinful heart, and then seeking to lay the blame upon some evil beast? Am I with the ten or with the One? Do I look upon His great promises and prophecies as idle dreams, and take part with the vain philosophies of the world? If I do, I am like the brethren who conspired against Joseph to slay him. I am like the Jews who murdered the Brother Who would have saved them.

## AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS CHRIST, I thank Thee with all my heart for coming to see if it be well with me. I would make a throne for Thee in my heart, and pray Thee to abide with me for ever. When I see Thee afar off, may I run to welcome Thee! When Thou drawest nigh, may I rejoice with a pure heart!

## RESOLUTION.

So to act that I may be glad to be found by Jesus.

## THOUGHT.

'My soul is athirst for God.'

## Reuben's Kalf-heartedness.

First Prelude. Picture: Reuben looking into the empty pit.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my understanding and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation the necessity of strongly opposing evil.

### CONSIDERATION.

The eldest brother was moved with compassion for his innocent young brother. Two of the ten seem to have been kinder-hearted than the eight others. Reuben would have saved Joseph altogether; Judah wished for a lighter measure than death. But neither were brave enough to resist evil. Reuben reproves not evil; he only suggests another kind of death, in order that he may return and save his brother in secret; he is ruled by policy, expediency, love of popularity, fear of turning numbers against him. Had he boldly denounced the wicked proposal of his brethren, he would have been on the side of Jehovah, and prevented a cruel wrong; he would have saved himself long years of remorse, and long years of deceit towards his father. The wrath of his brethren would have been perhaps terrible, but short. The misery his half-hearted conduct produced was deep and long.

#### APPLICATION.

How often I am half-hearted, afraid of opposition, fearful of the world's opinion! I think a straightforward

course unwise; so I invent excuses, slightly blame those I really admire, speak of their rashness in order to excuse my own lukewarmness. I do not wish my brother to be killed, but I advise him to be stifled. I put him in a pit just to gain a certain sort of credit with the world for prudence and sagacity, and then I think I will come and take him out secretly just to save my own conscience. But the world, perhaps, is a little too strong for me, and when I come to the pit I find my Joseph is gone, and my portion nothing but lamentation and woe. Why am I so faint-hearted? Why do I not at once that which is right, leaving results in the hands of God? I will choose His side, and the side of His servants, and neither palter nor parley with the world.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST! Reuben would have saved Joseph, Pilate would have saved Thee, if they could have done so without compromising themselves. Let me not partake of their timidity, but give me courage and resolution, that I may boldly rebuke vice, and never treat with Thy enemies for a moment.

### RESOLUTION.

To be thorough and straightforward in all things, especially to-day in . . .

## THOUGHT.

'The LORD is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me.'

# Joseph in the Vit.

First Prelude. Picture: Nine brothers sitting down to eat bread; the coat of many colours by them.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, enlighten my mind and inflame my will, that I may learn by this meditation not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

## CONSIDERATION.

The beloved son is taken, snared, stripped, cast into the pit. The hard-hearted brothers sit down to enjoy their midday meal, heedless of the love that prompted Joseph to follow them all the way from Shechem to Dothan. Jesus was stripped of His garment, even as Joseph was stripped of his so many hundred years before. The soldiers sat down at the foot of the Cross, even as the false brethren sat down to eat bread when Joseph was in his agony in the pit. He was suffering there, and he knew not what a wonderful type he was of a far greater Sufferer. He had heard the proposal for his murder, and he feared yet that it might be carried out. Alone in the depth of the pit, he looks up to the hot sky for deliverance: his brothers are eating and drinking, caring nothing for his sufferings and terror,

## APPLICATION.

Am I mourning with Joseph or feasting with his brethren? Is my Saviour put far away from me, and are

His sufferings hid from my thoughts? I look at the coat of many colours. I know that my Brother is near, but my heart is hardened to all His sighs, and I care not for His grief, for I have chosen my evil companions, and though the bread they give me is nothing but a stone, I follow the ways of the world and leave Him to mourn for my soul in vain. I have heard unmoved their plans for His slaughter. I have seen unmoved their attempts to hide Him. He is not dead, but He is buried, and I dally with His persecutors.

### AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS! my brother; make me faithful to Thee! May I never join with those who plot against Thee. Give me grace to confess Thee before men, and if needful to risk my life for Thee.

## RESOLUTION.

Never to allow Jesus to be put out of sight.

### THOUGHT.

'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.'

# The Selling of Ioseph.

First Prelude. Picture: The brethren drawing Joseph out of the pit.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, enlighten my

mind and inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation never to betray Thee.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The caravan draws nigh. Merchants and camels bring sweet-scented goods, balm of Gilead, myrrh bitter and precious. Slaves, too, are probably with them, and to this goodly company Joseph is sold, and takes his place with the other slaves. As Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, so Joseph was sold for one-third less, so small a price did his brethren gain for their sin; two pieces of silver each—for this paltry gain did the grandsons of Isaac sell their brother to the grandsons of Ishmael. And they thought they had been merciful in their proceedings, and took credit to themselves for not killing him then and there. They had hidden their wickedness in the pit; they were now going to hide it in a far country.

### APPLICATION.

The caravan of this world draws very nigh to me. Shall I sell my Jesus for the things of this life; for the spicery of praise, the balm of flattery, the myrrh, the sweet bitterness of intellectual strife; for the pieces of silver, the gross material love of money? What am I selling my Jesus for? I have not killed Him, O no, I had nothing to do with that; I will only betray Him, I will let the Ishmaelites have Him, and I shall gain the pieces of silver, and I shall lose the inconvenient sight of the perfect One beloved of His Father, the perfect One to Whose perfection I cannot attain. The caravan shall depart out of sight; and shall I be content?

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS! my only Beloved One! let me never betray Thee? May I count all the things of the world but dross, so that I may possess Thee! Let me not draw Thee out of the pit only to sell Thee! Let me not lift Thee from the hidden depth of my heart only to betray Thee under pretence of serving Thee!

## RESOLUTION.

Never to make a bargain with CHRIST's enemies.

#### THOUGHT.

'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

# The Forrow of Jacob.

First Prelude. Picture: The coat of many colours dipped in blood.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, enlighten mine eyes and inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation to abhor deceit and cruelty.

## CONSIDERATION.

The devil is the father of lies and the lover of cruelty. Joseph's brethren were carrying out his schemes when they gave vent to their revenge and cruelty. But though the strong man armed kept the house, another stronger

than he came upon him, and turned all his schemes to the advancement of Joseph and the glory of God. Meantime what suffering! what terror! what anxiety! what despair! Twenty years of deceit, twenty years of watching their father's misery! How often they must have longed for the days of comparative innocence when they watched their brother coming over the plains of Dothan. Nine Judases left to the misery of twenty years of deceit and remorse, witnesses of a sorrow they could neither comfort nor alleviate.

#### APPLICATION.

Have I ever allowed revengeful motives to warp my strict sense of truth? Have I ever caused sorrow to another by a falsehood? I may not have done a cruel act, I may not have told a downright lie, but I may have caused sorrow by base insinuations. I may not have killed my brother, I may not even have sold him, but I may have dipped his coat in blood, I may have tarnished his reputation, I may have blemished his character, and this I may have done in revenge for some fancied insult, or simply because he was more beloved or more successful than myself. If I have done any wrong of this kind let me not stand still and witness the sorrow of another, but let me at any risks repair it as far as I am able.

#### AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS! Full of mercy and forgiveness! Thou wouldst have forgiven Judas had he repented. Forgive me all my deceit, my envy, my unkindness, forasmuch as I have done it unto one of the least of Thy brethren I have done it unto Thee!

#### RESOLUTION.

To repair at once any wrong I may have done.

#### THOUGHT.

'Consider the end thereof, and thou shalt never do amiss.'

# Joseph amongst Strangers.

First Prelude. Picture: A steward carefully registering all operations.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation how to perform all my duties diligently.

### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph in Egypt. Far from his loving father, his eyes opened to the treachery of his brothers! alone in a strange country. How does he act? He worships God, and does his duty to his master. God was with him. This shows that, like Abraham his great-grandfather, like Isaac his grandfather, he had the worship of his God always near to his heart. The nights and days of visions and of lonely musings now bore fruit; a life of activity amongst strangers needed all the support of the meditations of the past. Silence, diligence, faithfulness, prayerfulness, these were the qualities shown forth by Joseph; and by the blessing of God the despised slave, sold for twenty

pieces of silver, becomes the chief of the house and the ruler of all. Diligence in prayer causes diligence in work, and diligence in work always wins confidence.

#### APPLICATION.

How do I behave in a position that I am forced into? or a work I do not like? Perhaps I have the very thing given me to do which I most thoroughly dislike; perhaps I am obliged to live with those with whom I have no sympathy. What should my first thought be? The Glory of God. What the second? To do what I have to do in the best possible manner. I would rather be tending the sheep on the plains of Shechem than watching Potiphar's workmen. I would rather be worshipping at the Patriarch's altar than beholding the idolatry of the Egyptians. But what has God given me to do? Where has He sent me? There I must go, and that I must do; and I will do it with all my heart, and go wherever He sends me cheerfully. Good will come out of evil, and my cause is in His hands.

#### AFFECTION.

O, Heavenly Father, wherever I go no one can take me from Thee! I cannot be separated from Thee except by my own act. Thy presence enfolds me. Make me more and more sensible of this, and grant that I may cultivate the sense of Thy presence as my dearest and holiest possession.

RESOLUTION.

To be diligent in work and prayer.

THOUGHT.

'Fervent in spirit, serving the LORD.'

# Joseph Tempfed.

First Prelude. Picture: A white lily, tall and strong. Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation to know my temptations and to fly from them.

#### CONSIDERATION.

After success comes temptation. The very success causes temptation. The temptation is near, intimate, hidden under the same roof. The tempter is unsuspected, wily, persevering, tempting day by day. To sin is safe, to refuse to sin dangerous. But there is no hesitation on Joseph's part. There is no dallying with sin. Nothing but unhesitating refusal. When refusal is of no avail there is sudden flight. And remark, the sin against a human being is not so much thought about as the sin against God. Many think that they may sin safely if they neither betray a trust nor bring others into trouble. They forget the sin against God, but this was the sin in Joseph's mind.

#### APPLICATION.

Do I ever listen to the tempters of this world? Do I ever encourage idolatry of the world or of self, which is spiritual impurity? When asked to do anything which lowers the Christian standard, do I dally with it? Do I make excuses? Do I find out reasons of expediency? I

must boldly refuse to sin against God. If pressed I must depart. Never mind appearances. God knows the truth.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD, I pray Thee not to allow me to be tempted more than I am able to bear, but when I am tempted make a way for me to escape: let me not be taken captive by the world with its promises, but enable me by Thy grace to keep undefiled my body and my soul.

#### RESOLUTION.

To fly at once from those who would decoy me from my duty.

#### THOUGHT.

'Escape for thy life. Look not behind thee.'

# Joseph Falsely Accused.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph before his angry master.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation meekness, silence, and trust in Thee.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The trusted steward is accused of acting the part of the basest traitor. How great his grief at the accusation! How fearful to be thought the betrayer of the master who had trusted and honoured him! But he answers not. He does not defend himself. He accuses no one. How different from the spirit of the world! The spirit of the world would have counselled a noisy defence: the spirit of Christ counsels silence. Christ before Pilate answered not a word. Those who have committed their cause to God are not anxious clamorously to assert their innocence before men.

### APPLICATION.

What do I do when I am falsely accused?—when my motives are misunderstood? Do I justify myself clamorously? Do I accuse some one else? The good opinion of good men is indeed precious, but when appearances are against us we must suffer in silence and commit our cause to God. Let not the sin of another cause me to sin. What we are in God's sight, that we are in reality—nothing more and nothing less.

#### AFFECTION.

O holy LORD JESUS CHRIST! silent and lamb-like before Thine accusers, grant me silence when I am falsely accused, meekness towards my accusers, and an unwavering trust in Thee.

#### RESOLUTION.

To bear to be thought less well of than I fancy I deserve.

#### THOUGHT.

'Having a conscience void of offence.'

# Joseph in Prison.

First Prelude. Picture: Bars and chains.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation to persevere in welldoing.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph is in prison, but still waiting upon God. Diligent persevering service is still his aim. The diligence that followed his brethren to Dothan, the diligence that ruled Potiphar's house so well, is now employed in the service of God in the prison. There is no disgust at a lowlier lot. There is no dislike of the prison duties. And yet we know he suffered, for we are told that 'the iron entered into his soul.' The secret of his diligence and his cheerfulness was his constant communion with God. All he did was 'not with eye-service as men pleasers,' but 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

#### APPLICATION.

If trouble befalls me, do I keep my trust in God? Am I content to work on in a lower place? Or, do I mourn over my degradation, my isolation? Do I remember that all my work is God's work, and that it ought to be entirely immaterial to me where He sends me, or what He gives me to do, so long as I am doing His Holy will? A menial in a prison may be as great in

Gon's sight as the steward of a nobleman's palace—far greater, if in that prison he be doing God's work. May I do what I have to do well, and never mind how lowly the task may be.

### AFFECTION.

O dear Lord Jesus! instead of murmuring that my work is not grand enough, may I strive to realise what a privilege it is to be allowed to work for Thee at all. I thank Thee for each little lowly task Thou hast given me, and I pray Thee to give me grace that I may perform it well.

#### RESOLUTION.

Wherever I am, to look round and see what I can do for GoD.

THOUGHT.

'In all labour there is profit.'

# Joseph as Interpreter.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph serving the chief butler and chief baker.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn that spiritual insight is only to be obtained by waiting upon GoD.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph cannot be kept down. He is made the ser-

vant of servants; he has to wait upon two of Pharaoh's chief officers, and yet his gifts cause him to rise up far beyond the level of anyone in the prison. And what is the secret of this? Doing his best. He is full of observation; he is full of kindliness. 'Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?' he says to the prisoners he has charge of. He does not do his office merely as a matter of routine. He puts his heart into it; he observes and is sorry for the sufferings of others. And when he hears their trouble, he says, 'Do not interpretations belong to God?' Here is love to man and trust in God, and this is the secret of spiritual insight.

### APPLICATION.

God will not let me learn much about spiritual things if I take no delight in conversing with Him; to know His hidden things requires a heart right with God and man. A self-occupied, morbid, morose disposition will never open my mind to heavenly things; if I wish to learn about them, I must have great power of sympathy and great communings with God. Is it nothing to me when my fellow-travellers look sad? Do I point them to their Heavenly Father in their sadness? If I look up to Him, if I look round upon them, I shall have no time to consider my own sorrows. Do I realise this? And what shall I do in the future?

#### AFFECTION.

O Mighty Saviour! Give me Thy heavenly power of sympathy that I may divine the sorrows of others and direct them to the true Comforter. Give me spiritual insight that I may help them to understand the dangers and the deliverances which are near them.

#### RESOLUTION.

To think of GoD and my neighbour in preference to self.

## THOUGHT.

'In Thy light shall we see light.'

# Joseph Forgotten.

First Prelude. Picture: The chief butler giving the cup to Pharaoh. Joseph in prison.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation to trust Thee with patience and quietness.

### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph in prison; two full years longer; his touching appeal forgotten. 'Think on me when it shall be well with thee.' Neglect is very hard to bear, especially from those we have befriended. It is more difficult to bear than injury or privation. St. John the Baptist probably felt being left in the prison at Machaerus more than all the privations of the desert. Perhaps the chief butler feared to forfeit his newly-recovered favour by directing Pharaoh's attention to a prisoner. Perhaps intimacy with a stranger, a Hebrew, would have been no credit to him. Joseph had served the chief butler in prison; the

chief butler takes no trouble to serve Joseph. He may really have forgotten him; but he could not have cared, or he would have taken the trouble to remember.

#### APPLICATION.

How do I feel when I am forgotten and passed over, perhaps by those who owe me gratitude and consideration? Am I angry and disturbed? Do I brood over my wrongs, or do I know and feel that I have God with me, and have no right to look for anything more? He who has learnt to accept neglect has attained to true freedom of spirit. The way to do this is to think lowly of myself. If I am occupied with myself I shall expect every one else to be so too. Let me take any period of neglect as a time of retreat, a hiding from the world, a period of blessing specially sent by God.

## AFFECTION.

O dear LORD! let me be forgotten by all so long as I am not forgotten by Thee! Let me be hidden in the sweet prison of Thy heart, and learn of Thee what the world cannot teach.

### RESOLUTION.

To be calm and restful during forced inactivity and neglect.

#### THOUGHT.

'Tarry thou the LORD's leisure,'

# Joseph af Court.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph standing before the king.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation to seek and obtain the true wisdom.

#### CONSIDERATION.

A sudden change from the depths of a prison to a king's court. Deliverance came without any effort on Joseph's part. They who brought him out were in haste. Not so Joseph. He was quiet and calm, and had made all needful preparation. No fear, no hurry; he considers the business before him with dignity and calmness. Why is this? Because he refers all things to God. He never for one moment loses sight of the fact that he is the servant of the true God. It is not he who gives the answer. It is 'God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace,' and 'God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.' The thought of God brings forgetfulness of self.

#### APPLICATION.

When circumstances suddenly change with me—when events call me to take a more prominent part, when I have to decide either for myself or others—why am I restless, changeable, hurried, uncertain, excitable. It is because I cannot lose the thought of myself in the

thought of God. How often I might have interpreted the difficulties of others, shown them what to do, helped them in a great crisis, if I had had the simple thought, 'God shall give thee an answer of peace.' The thought of self brings mist, confusion, agitation; the thought of God peace, wisdom, help, and comfort. What hinders me from having the thought of God to fill my soul with peace? Self-love is the evil eye that fills the whole of me with darkness.

### AFFECTION.

O LORD GOD, I pray Thee to take away self and give me Thyself. Thou art True Light, True Wisdom. If I have nothing of my own I shall have everything of Thine.

#### RESOLUTION.

To speak and act as God's servant, not as an independent person.

## THOUGHT.

'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'

# Joseph as Counsellor.

First Prelude. Picture: The lonely Hebrew standing amidst all the powerful Egyptian counsellors.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to illumine my mind and to warm my will, that I may

learn from this meditation how to obtain the spirit of counsel and understanding.

#### CONSIDERATION.

From the prison to the palace! Joseph, once the captive, now the counsellor of one of the most powerful monarchs in the world.

Quiet, businesslike, composed, he tells in plain language the doom of Egypt and the way to avert it. He asks no one's advice; he requests no one to tell him how to deal with the capricious and passionate temper of a despot. He has one Counsellor—God Almighty. He knows from the past that he shall be protected in the future. He foretells the evil as well as the good. He advises energetic and immediate measures. He cares not whether the advice is well or ill received. He gives it from the Lord his God.

#### APPLICATION.

Do I take pains to understand the worldly matters that come before me, or do I scorn the common business of life, deeming it unworthy of those who might be occupied with prayer and meditation, and the duties of religion? In difficult questions do I ask God to help me, knowing that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof? The largest affair, such as the feeding of nations, as well as the smallest, such as the welfare of a single household, is His peculiar care; and it is an honour to be associated with Him in providing for the bodily wants of others. May I never be impatient when having to deal with temporal things, such as questions of food and clothing; but do all in a reverent, calm spirit, knowing that there is nothing trifling, nothing uninteresting to a

child of GoD, especially when the welfare of others is concerned.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD! I mourn that I have so often neglected my duties, and esteemed them commonplace because they seemed small and unimportant. Forgive me, and make me to see the dignity of being the King's helper in providing for His servants.

#### RESOLUTION.

To give attention to business, to accounts, to house-hold duties, for the love of God.

#### THOUGHT.

'Thou givest them their meat in due season.'

# Joseph's Advice.

First Prelude. Picture: Seven full ears, seven thin ears.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn from this meditation how to lay up good store for the future.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph foretold the seven years of plenty, but he foretold that afterwards the seven years of famine should come. The seven years of plenty were not to be spent in reckless enjoyment or in prodigal waste. They were to be made years of forethought, years of storing up.

The miser saves for the sake of saving; the good man saves for the sake of giving out again in a day of difficulty. The wise man takes advantage of opportunities; when he has wealth of learning, or religion, or wisdom, he lays up for the time of scarcity, the time when perhaps he shall be far away from all these things.

### APPLICATION.

Do I take advantage of all my opportunities and lay up for the time of need? Perhaps I was once surrounded by the blessings of the intellect and cared not for them; or I was reckless and a spendthrift with regard to friendship and human affection; or, perhaps, I gathered nothing out of the many years of religious privileges I once had; and now I am 'in a barren and dry land where no water is.' I am punished now for having laid up so little. I might have had such a store of good things if I had diligently gathered and diligently stored up. May I learn from this to make the most of all my privileges, particularly of my communions. May I strive to store them up and retain their grace, for I know not when I may have the opportunity of receiving again.

#### AFFECTION.

O my God, I thank Thee for the many years of plenty I have enjoyed. May I so use them that the years of dearth, when they come, may have no power over me.

#### RESOLUTION.

To lay up a store of prayers, meditations, communions, whilst I am able.

#### THOUGHT.

'Open thine eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.'

# Corn in Egypt.

First Prelude. Picture: A granary full of corn surrounded by an arid waste.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may know where to seek the true Bread, and may have energy to find it.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The Egyptians in their distress and starvation went to Pharaoh. They cried to their earthly king for help. He sent them to Joseph. The nations around, and in the far distance, heard that there was corn in Egypt; they too came, and they too were sent to Joseph. Joseph's father and brethren heard that there was corn in Egypt; they too sent to that far-off land, and lo! the keeping of the corn was in the hand of Joseph the despised one. He was the centre, the hope of all men, the ruler of the Egyptians, the deliverer of the nations, the saviour of the brethren who had despised him.

And who is the spiritual Joseph? Is it not Jesus, the Saviour of all men who come to Him, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the Holy One whose brethren did not believe in Him? The nations of old were hungry; they sought Joseph and found bread, and were satisfied. The nations now are hungry, and restless, and dissatisfied, but they will not seek Jesus, Who would give them the Bread of Life.

#### APPLICATION.

There is no true satisfaction in the arid waste of a worldly life, and yet do I not try to be satisfied with it? I am one of the children of light, and yet I am not as wise as the children of this world. They even find out where to go for their bread, and they lose no time in seeking it. I, too, know where to find the True Bread, but do I take the trouble of the journey, and do I rejoice to bring the price? If I have a long way to walk to the Altar of the LORD, if I have to get up early in the morning, am I not apt to grudge the trouble, to avoid the exertion? Do I not think sometimes it costs too much money, it takes up too much time, when I would grudge no money, no time for something the world thinks necessary or expedient?

### AFFECTION.

O Blessed LORD JESUS! True Bread of Life! pardon me for neglecting Thee and spending money for that which is not bread. Thou art the true corn, Thou alone canst satisfy the hunger of the soul.

#### RESOLUTION.

To seek more earnestly the Bread of Life, and to grudge no exertion in obtaining it.

#### THOUGHT.

'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?'

# The Discipline of the Kardened Soul.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph's brethren bowing down before him.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to strengthen my will, that I may learn how to follow Thee in the ways of holy discipline.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph's brethren came to him for bread. They knew him not, and as yet they felt no remorse for their He knew them, but restrained himself, for they were not to be restored to the privileges of kinship until they had undergone the roughness of discipline. Gradually they were to be brought to the knowledge of their sin, gradually they were to be restored to brotherhood. Their own hearts were to be prepared by little and little for the great future that lay before them. Joseph, the LORD JESUS, prepares the hearts of His people in the same way. They come, hungering for earthly food, and He does not let them go until they yearn for their spiritual privileges; they come half-hearted and He insists upon their giving up all to Him, even the cherished Benjamin; they come to Him, as the multitude came for the loaves, and He speaks roughly to them in order to convince them of sin. Joseph's brethren had to go through the Purgative Way before the Illuminative

Way dawned upon them; and the brethren of Jesus have to do the same.

#### APPLICATION.

Entire self-surrender is what Jesus claims. Am I seeking Him for my own advantage? Am I keeping back some Benjamin of my heart? I must give all to Him. But perhaps I do not know Him, I do not see Him as He is. 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' What keeps me from knowing Him? Some unacknowledged, unrepented sin. I go to Him and expect the bread of prosperity, and wonder why all my desires are not granted. Instead, I am met by a demand for entire surrender, and He speaks roughly to me. Why is this? His heart yearns for my heart, but my heart yearns not for Him, but for His gifts. I will accept the discipline; I will try to find out what it is that prevents me from knowing the face of my Brother.

#### AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS! May I know Thy voice even when Thou seemest to speak roughly to me! May I keep a brave and loyal heart when led in the dark ways of holy discipline! May I be steadfast and self-sacrificing in the Purgative Way, until it pleaseth Thee to bring me out into the way of Illumination.

#### RESOLUTION.

To be steadfast to Jesus when deprived of all comfort.

#### THOUGHT.

'Nevertheless, though I am sometimes afraid, yet put I my trust in Thee.'

# The Suffering of the Waiting Soul.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph's brethren in prison. Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I beseech Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may learn wisdom by patient waiting.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph put his brothers in ward for three days. They had been the cause of a long and dreary imprisonment to him, but no thought of revenge enters his mind. action is simply for the sake of gaining time, of giving them time to think. Before he places them under guard he swears by the life of Pharaoh; when they come out he tells them that he fears God, and shows them what to do if they fear Him too. He enters into a covenant with They are to leave one brother behind; they are to fetch the other. On this condition they were to have bread for all. Thus does the true Joseph—the CHRIST reveal Himself gradually to the souls He yearns for. places them in ward, He gives them time to think, He keeps one close to Him, He sends for another, He offers food to all, and all this time they know not the reason. He reveals Himself and His doings gradually.

#### APPLICATION.

How is God teaching me at the present time? Have I been journeying, trafficking, occupied busily though innocently? Have I been oppressing my brethren, or deceiving my parents? I have come to a sudden check. I am put in prison. I am given time to think. Perhaps my prison is bodily infirmity, perhaps mental slowness, perhaps spiritual weakness, perhaps the narrowness of poverty. In any case, it is a check. Perhaps I have avoided meditation, perhaps I have despised retreats, perhaps I have refused to spend three days with God. But He is merciful, and He will be heard. He holds me with His loving hand, and He makes His own conditions. I have sought His presence, and I am not to break loose. One brother is to be left, the youngest is to be sought; all are to be brought to Him. Had it not been for this, should I have cared to bring my brother to Him?

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD CHRIST! I thank Thee for Thy loving correction. I praise Thee for holding me. I entreat Thee to continue Thy watchful care of me, and I pray Thee that I may never leave Thee except to bring my brother to Thee.

#### RESOLUTION.

To accept any suffering thankfully.'

#### THOUGHT.

'Whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth.'

# The Remorse of the Awakening Soul.

First Prelude. Picture: The brethren speaking of their sin; Joseph weeping.

Second Prelude. Prayer: O LORD, I pray Thee to enlighten my mind and to inflame my will, that I may know and feel all the love Thou bearest to penitent sinners.

### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph wept for his brethren before they wept for themselves. The light begins to dawn upon them. The quiet time has borne fruit. All has come back to them. The anguish of their brother, the touching words with which he implored them to have pity on him, their own hard-heartedness; and now they are to be punished. Attrition, or fear of punishment, has come to them; contrition, or sorrow for sin, has yet to come. brother against whom they sinned is weeping for them, and they knew not that he understood them. as they are told; they take the first step in the way of righteousness; and even then, after this small obedience, they find a present in their sacks. And so it is with CHRIST. He weeps with His erring brethren, and they know not that He understands them; yet so great is His love towards them that the first act of obedience is abundantly rewarded.

#### APPLICATION.

When the sins and the mistakes of long-past years come back to me, and I find out that I am verily guilty concerning my brother, and verily guilty concerning God, may I remember that my Lord is weeping with me, though perhaps I know not that He understands me. The thought of Him will soften my heart, will turn attrition into contrition, will change remorse into repentance; and as light increases, love will grow stronger. He alone can restore, He alone can repair. Let me not waste time by wrangling with the past, but at once appeal to Him, the Brother Who wept for my sins on the Mount of Olives, in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Cross of Calvary.

#### AFFECTION.

O dear LORD JESUS CHRIST! Thou Who hast wept for my sins, help my repentance, and accept my tears! Grant that, not the fear of punishment, but the love of Thee may move my heart to true penitence.

### RESOLUTION.

After weeping for my sin, to take the first opportunity of performing some act of obedience.

#### THOUGHT.

'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.'

# Working in the Dark.

First Prelude. Picture: The nine brethren finding the money in their sacks.

Second Prelude. Pray for thorough confidence in Gop.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Joseph sent his brethren on a painful errand. It was to bring to him the youngest son of their father: his cherished one, the child of his dearest affections, the only one left, as he thought, by his best-beloved Rachel. Joseph not only sent his brethren back with this sad business on their minds, but kept one of them bound, in order to make sure of their return. They had this bad news also to break to their father. What object could the governor of the great country of Egypt have in taking away the youngest child of an aged Hebrew in a far country? And yet he must mean kindly by them, for their sacks were filled with corn, they had provision given them for the journey, and when they came to the end of it their money was returned. Wherefore this mixture of generosity and harshness? They were perplexed, and their hearts failed them.

#### APPLICATION.

When my soul—half enlightened, troubled, and perplexed—at last comes to work with God, I must not expect to be able to understand His ways, nor the reason

He gives me certain things to do. I have begun to trade with my LORD and SAVIOUR. His gifts are princely. has filled my sack, not only with corn, but with the finest wheat flour; He has furnished me with provisions for the way, the Bread of His Sacrament, and the Wine of Joy, the Water of Life, and the Oil of the Holy Ghost; and all these are furnished without money and without price. the money is all returned, and is in the mouth of my sack. He is, indeed, a magnificent Ruler, in His hands are wonderful gifts; but why does He send me on such sad errands? Why does He bind my Simeon? Why does He ask for my Benjamin? Cannot He give me something to do for Him which I can understand, something I can enjoy? No, I must go on working in the dark. carry my message: I must make my sacrifices. help others to make theirs; and I must be content when I cannot understand.

#### AFFECTION.

LORD JESUS, I adore Thee for Thy wonderful and overflowing bounty; I know that perplexity and darkness are means of cultivating a sure trust in Thee: I will love and praise Thee for ever, only seeking to do Thy Holy Will

#### RESOLUTION.

To persevere in the midst of perplexity.

#### THOUGHT.

'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'

# The Resignation of the Forrowful Soul.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob resigning Benjamin. Second Prelude. Pray for perfect conformity to the will of God.

#### CONSIDERATION.

Jacob refused to let Benjamin go. But God's hand is stronger than Jacob's. The famine is sore in the land; the pressure of want is great. The brethren must seek again the face of the ruler—so stern and yet so kind, so exacting and yet so full of love. They know that they will receive no corn if they leave their youngest brother at home; with bitter sorrow Jacob is at last prevailed upon to let his best-beloved child depart. Having once made this sacrifice, the generous spirit grows within him; double money and a present he orders to be taken: Israel the Prince behaves like a Prince, and sends the Prime Minister of Egypt far more than he requires.

#### APPLICATION.

How often have I struggled to avoid complying with the demands of my LORD and SAVIOUR, and then the famine has been sore in the land; a famine sent in mercy in order to force me to give up my cherished idol. It may be a famine of the affections, sent to compel me to cry out to God for His love; it may be a spiritual famine, causing me to fly from the things of God to God Himself. May I seek, instead of giving Him less, to give Him more than He asks: not only to send Him my cherished child, but to send Him double money, silver and gold purified and tried in the fire, the balm of prayer, the honey of praise, the myrrh of repentance, the spices of good works, the nuts and almonds of holy thoughts and meditations. It may be only a little balm, a little honey, but it will be a token of my love, a sign of my willingness to do all His will would have me do; and the resignation of the sorrowful soul will be turned into the joy of the generous soul.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD and SAVIOUR! I have often withheld from Thee the very things Thou hast required; give me a generous self-sacrificing spirit that I may be willing to give Thee all. What hast Thou not done for me! O make me joyful and glad when I am able to give Thee a token of my love.

### RESOLUTION.

To think 'What may I do for GoD?' instead of 'What must I do for GoD?'

#### THOUGHT.

'God loveth a cheerful giver.'

# The Brother's Yearning.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph weeping in his chamber.

Second Prelude. Pray for a deeper sense of the love of God.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The souls of his brethren are gradually drawn towards Joseph. The salutation 'Peace be unto you' is given to them all by his steward at the entrance of his house. His own greeting to Benjamin, the chosen soul, is 'Gop be gracious unto thee, my son.' Hospitality is freely extended to them: they are to feast in the presence of Joseph. Simeon is brought out of prison, Benjamin gladly welcomed, the feast made ready, their present accepted, their doubts laid to rest-what a reward for their obedience! But the giver of all this happiness where is he? Weeping in his chamber; yearning for his brother. He is weeping for the sins of his brethren: he is weeping for the anguish of his father; he is weeping for all those long years of absence and alienation; he is weeping for the love of his youngest brother, to whom he cannot yet reveal himself.

# APPLICATION.

I have caused the tears of one far holier than Joseph to flow. The Lord Jesus Christ has wept for His

brethren three times. He wept over their sorrows at the grave of Lazarus; He wept over their sins on the Mount of Olives; He wept over the weight of their sins and their sorrows in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had not, like Joseph, even a chamber to weep in, so He entered into the garden, and wept there. And now what do I feel about Him? He has given me His peace; He has spread for me His feast; He has accepted my poor offering; He is yearning for my heart. Have I given it to Him? My sins helped to cause His tears: shall my love add to His joy? At the Grave, on the Mount, in the Garden of Sorrow, He foresaw all my sins, all my sorrows, all my faithlessness, all my rejection of Him. I will ask Him to let me weep with Him that I may be worthy to feast with Him.

#### AFFECTION.

O long-suffering LORD and SAVIOUR! I adore Thy sorrows and I thank Thee for Thy tears. Take possession of my heart, and gradually make it fit for Thee. Make me to know and feel how great is the love which caused Thee to weep, and give me true contrition for all my sins.

#### RESOLUTION.

To rest more in the great love of the Heart of Jesus.

THOUGHT.

'JESUS wept.'

# Joseph's Feast.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph's hall. Three tables set for the banquet.

Second Prelude. Pray to be made worthy to feast in the kingdom of heaven.

#### CONSIDERATION.

After the weeping follows the feast. After sorrow comes joy. After the act of obedience comes the reward. After the wearisome, painful, anxious journey, behold the dinner in a King's palace. Obedience brings forth the privilege of warm fellowship and association, but the brotherly union is not yet accomplished; there must be vet more suffering before this takes place in all its fulness. There must be divisions, orderly and well-marked divi-The Egyptians eat by themselves, the Hebrews by themselves, the master of the feast by himself; but though the eleven eat by themselves, their brother sends them the best from his own table, and the portions are not equal, for the youngest receives most. And thus, in this present life there are divisions in the Kingdom of Grace, and to him who can receive most the largest portion is given; but in the Kingdom of Glory the union will be complete, and all who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.

#### APPLICATION.

God has placed me at a table of refreshment in His own house, the Church. He has given me the food of His Word, the refreshment of good thoughts and of holy services; and not only does He send me the wine of gladness, the bread of strength, the milk of the word, the honey of sweetness, the oil of the Spirit, but He gives me Himself to feed upon. Truly His goodness is a thing to marvel at! And yet how seldom am I really thankful! If I possessed the spirit of Benjamin, I should be treated like Benjamin. The soul that longs for God with all its strength is given five times as much as any of the others. I must accept God's gifts in a loving, thankful spirit. I will drink of His cup, and rejoice in the Lord.

#### AFFECTION.

O LORD JESUS CHRIST! Loving and merciful! I marvel at Thy goodness to me. I adore Thy bounty. Make me worthy to partake of Thy food. Make me thankful to Thee, and full of love to the brethren.

#### RESOLUTION.

To cultivate cheerfulness, and not to despair at the divisions in the Church.

#### THOUGHT.

'Rejoice in the LORD.'

# Joseph's Qup.

First Prelude. Picture: Benjamin finding the cup in his sack.

Second Prelude. Pray for confidence in God.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The banquet is finished, the sacks are well filled; in the light of the early morning the brethren leave with joy and thankfulness. Benjamin goes back, Judah is relieved from care, Simeon is released. They start on their journey with happy hearts; in a few hours all is changed. Joseph's cup is found in Benjamin's sack. The cup of joy is changed into the cup of sorrow. Surprise and indignation at being accused, dismay and misery at finding the accusation true, agony at the thought of their father's sorrow—all these feelings arise in the hearts of the brethren; their sufferings are bitter, they are terribly punished for the sin of old; and yet this suffering is to draw them still nearer to their brother.

### APPLICATION.

Have I not found the cup of suffering in my sack of corn? Have I not wondered why my earthly and spiritual joys are not more complete? Perhaps I have banqueted with the Great King, I have received great gifts, I am hastening home with joy; suddenly something strange, mysterious, occurs; I am falsely accused, wrong motives are imputed to me, I am bitterly reproached. What is the reason? It is to bring me back to the place

where I have banqueted. Perhaps I have been in too great a hurry to go away. Perhaps I have thought of the gifts more than of the Giver. Perhaps I cannot find out the reason, or anything like the reason. There is one thing for me to do, to get closer to GoD; in this I cannot make a mistake. This, somehow or other, will solve all the mystery.

### AFFECTION.

Most merciful Jesus, I welcome any event, however strange and mysterious, which will bring me nearer to Thee. Make all things work for Thy honour and my salvation. Nothing can separate me from Thee but my own act; in all my perplexities may I draw close to Thee!

### RESOLUTION.

To keep a cheerful, truthful mind in the midst of anxiety.

#### THOUGHT.

'All things work together for good to them that love God.'

# Judah's Offer.

First Prelude. Picture: Judah giving himself as a ransom for Benjamin.

Second Prelude. Pray for self-abnegation.

### CONSIDERATION.

The delay, the accusation, the return have already borne fruit. One of those who had been in the dreadful secret so many years has the opportunity of self-sacrifice. He seizes it. 'Let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord.' Twenty years ago Judah little cared for his father's sorrow. He had saved Joseph's life, but he had sold him into bondage. He had willingly entered into the plot to persuade his father that Joseph was slain by a wild beast. Mature age, sorrow, discipline had wrought a change in him; he who had sold his brother into bondage now offers to be a bondman for Benjamin and in his stead; he who had seen his father mourn, when a word from him would have stopped his tears, now offers his own life to save his father from anxiety; and thereby Judah becomes a type of the glorious Lion of Judah Who (though innocent of all offence) took upon Himself the form of a servant and gave His life for His brethren.

#### APPLICATION.

I blame Judah's wickedness in selling his brother; have I ever tried to imitate Judah in the nobleness of his offer? Those who have sinned deeply sometimes after repentance show a wonderful self-sacrifice. I have been petty and mean in many things. I may have sold my brother by taking advantage of him, by trying to get him out of the way when he has been an obstacle to my schemes, by keeping him in the background, by getting into his place in work, in affection, in reputation. When I have come to a sense of my sin, has my reparation been complete and generous, like that of Judah? Wholehearted in trying to get everything for myself, I should be whole-hearted in my self-sacrifice. May I bid farewell to all selfishness, and give myself up entirely to the good of others.

### AFFECTION.

O Lion of Judah! Who hast given Thyself for me, infuse into my heart Thy spirit of sacrifice; grant me such love for Thee that I may be content to be a servant of the brethren for Thy dear sake.

#### RESOLUTION.

To make reparation with all my heart whenever I have the opportunity.

THOUGHT.

'Restore Thou them that are penitent.'

# The Reconciliation.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph in his glory surrounded by his brethren.

Second Prelude. Pray for a glimpse of the King in His beauty.

# CONSIDERATION.

The offer of Judah has brought deliverance to his brethren and himself. All their doubts and fears are at an end. The lad they sold to the travelling merchants is the ruler of Egypt—the trusted minister of Pharaoh. The sheaves of the brethren bow down to Joseph's sheaf. The sun and the moon and the eleven stars pale before Joseph's star; and thus it will be when the Crucifix is beheld by the eye of faith. The Servant of servants, the Despised and Rejected, is at the right hand of His Father calling His brethren to come to Him. We behold Him on the Cross, we see Him in His glory. The Lamb persecuted and slain is surrounded by wor-

shipping angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. 'Come near to Me, I pray you,' is His cry now; 'Depart from Me,' will be His sentence hereafter on all those who reject His gracious invitation.

#### APPLICATION.

Do I recognise my Brother? Do I love to talk with Him? If not, why not? I am blinded by my own self-love, my own frivolity. I have seen Him on the Cross, for I helped to put Him there; have I seen Him in His glory at the right hand of the Father? 'Come near to Me, I pray you,' He says to my soul. Do I answer Him, and draw near to Him, and feed upon Him, as He abides on the Altar ready to give Himself again and again to me? Is it the greatest delight of my heart to hear this loving call? If not, why not? What is the hindrance? Too much pleasure, or too much business? Too little love, or too little knowledge?

He is waiting to forgive me all my sins, He is willing to forget all my forgetfulness of Him. He only longs for my complete self-surrender, my co-operation with His grace; why do I not give it?

### AFFECTION.

My glorified LORD, I thank Thee for Thy goodness in showing Thyself to me; I magnify Thee for Thy great mercy towards me in calling me to such great privileges; I pray Thee to make me know Thee better and love Thee more.

### RESOLUTION.

To turn remorse for my sins into gratitude for Christ's benefits.

#### THOUGHT.

'They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.'

# The King's Gifts.

First Prelude. Picture: The caravan starting to bring Israel into Egypt.

Second Prelude. Pray for grace to make a right use of all GoD's gifts.

# CONSIDERATION.

Five years of famine were yet to come. Joseph feared for his father and his brethren. He wished to have the care of them; he longed to see them under his own eyes. The poor exile, who had been sold for twenty pieces of silver, now gives his youngest brother three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment, besides presents to all the others. The King who made him able to do this, sends ten asses laden with goods. and ten she-asses laden with provisions for the way. besides waggons to bring Jacob and all his house. is made ready, if he will only take advantage of his privilege. The King of Egypt is profuse in his gifts. makes it easy for Israel to come to him; but the King of Heaven is more generous still, for He gives us spiritual gifts. He sends His good things-Faith, Hope, Charity, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and provisions for the way-the Bread of Life, the Blood of Christ, the True Faith, the Holy Law, the Heavenly Promises, the Holy Scriptures, Meditation, Prayer, Instruction, and Spiritual Reading. The waggons, too, have come for us

—the Pleadings of Preachers, the Grace of Compunction, Contrition, Confession, and Absolution.

# APPLICATION.

My Joseph has sent for me, and the King has sent His gifts. The journey is easy, and there is a warm welcome at the end of it; but perchance after all I am too slothful to take it. I prefer remaining quiet, and running the risk of five years of famine. Let me rouse myself, and see what wonderful powers and gifts God has sent Have I asked Him to infuse into me Faith, Hope, and Charity? Have I prayed for a still larger measure of the seven gifts that have once been given me? Have I sought the Holy Eucharist? Have I studied the Faith? Have I tried to keep the Law? Have I rejoiced in the Promises? Have I fed on the Scriptures? How have I used Meditation, Prayer, Instruction, and Reading? And have I complained of the length and difficulty of the journey, and yet refused to take advantage of the waggons, and rejected the aid of the Church?

### AFFECTION.

I thank Thee, O Holy Jesus, that Thou hast sent me such gifts, and provided me with so many helps! Open mine eyes that I may see, and my mind that I may understand, so that I may use the gifts best fitted for me, and adore Thy bounty for ever.

#### RESOLUTION.

To receive gratefully and enjoy diligently all the spiritual helps sent to me.

### THOUGHT.

'The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O God, and Thou givest them their meat in due season.'

# Israel's Sacrifice.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob before the altar at Beersheba.

Second Prelude. Pray for grace to ask counsel of God.

# CONSIDERATION.

Jacob in his old age is moving into a new country for the sake of his far-off son: 'I will go and see him before I die.' He beholds the waggons, the provisions for his journey. His descendants, his flocks, his herds, and all that he has, are assembled together; the start is made, the new life begun. Yet one thing more: Israel seeks the blessing of the LORD, and he seeks it at Beersheba, the place where, many many years ago, his father Isaac had built an altar, and pitched his tent, and dug a well when he came up from the valley of Gerar. He remembers the blessings his father obtained there, and he seeks the sanction of Jehovah upon his new enterprise in the old sacred place so dear to his family. He does not seek in vain. God calls him by his old name of Jacob, speaks to him of his father, and promises him His support and presence.

#### APPLICATION.

Am I called away from my house into a far-off country? Am I led to begin a new life in my old age, amongst strangers? Let me not decide upon any course of action until I have taken counsel with Gop. Let

me not in heart forsake the old sacred places, but cherish everything belonging to the religious life of my kindred and parents, though circumstances may lead me far from the country where they fed their flocks and their herds. When members of a family are united in the love and worship of God, then family ties become doubly sacred: Isaac's memory becomes dearer to Jacob when present with the sacrifice; the Tent and the Well of the father become more precious to the son because the altar is also built there; and the altar becomes the place of counsel, where the command to depart loses all its bitterness. May I seek God's blessing as Jacob did, and never by words, and self-will, and undue haste, mar the work He has given me to do.

# AFFECTION.

O LORD my GOD, I thank Thee with all my heart for giving me the means of knowing Thy Holy Will; may I never take a single step without consulting Thee, without longing to follow Thee, and to do all good works which Thou hast prepared for me to walk in.

#### RESOLUTION.

Before making any important decision, to seek counsel of GoD at His altar.

# THOUGHT.

'It is good for me to draw near to God.'

# Seventy.

First Prelude. Picture: The long caravan of Israel going down into Egypt.

Second Prelude. Pray for trust in God and a good courage.

# CONSIDERATION.

Seventy souls in Egypt. Seventy children of Isaac amongst a strange people. Seventy who knew the true Seventy representing the Church in the world. All around the nations of the world were falling into idolatry. The descendants of Esau and of Ishmael were losing their holy traditions, and degrading themselves and their posterity. The inhabitants of Canaan were falling into the crimes which centuries later were to cause their destruction by the hands of the descendants of the Seventy. The Egyptians, the subjects of the greatest monarchy of the world, were worshipping beasts and cattle. The family of Jacob was selected to carry the knowledge of the true God to future generations. The little knot of Seventy was to be the grain of mustardseed springing up into the great tree which was to shelter the birds of all nations. Israel could not foresee his destiny, but he went on in faith and hope.

#### APPLICATION.

I belong to that Seventy. They are my kindred. They formed the Jewish Church, and this expanded into the Christian Church. The Church is small when compared with the world. There are still 800,000,000 of

professed unbelievers against less than 300,000,000 of professed believers in Christ; and of the professed believers how few communicants! and of these few communicants how many have given all their heart to God? It is a fearful question. Let me answer it for one soul only—my own. Do I carry on my religious practices? Do I value my privileges? Do I witness for the truth, less by talking than by living, amongst the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the unbelievers, the lukewarm, the half-hearted? If I do, let me go on and take courage. I know not what effect a consistent, well-ordered life may have. I know not how many spiritual children God will give me.

# AFFECTION.

O God, I thank Thee with all my heart that Thou hast placed me amongst the Seventy! I pray Thee to give me strength to stand firm in the Holy Catholic Faith, and never to look upon numbers as the test of truth.

# RESOLUTION.

To keep my rule of life quietly and unostentatiously wherever I may be.

# THOUGHT.

'Ye are the salt of the earth.'

# The **Weeting** of Jacob and Joseph.

First Prelude. Puture: The embrace of Jacob and Joseph.

Second Prelude. Pray for grace to forget all injuries.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The suffering, the separation, is over. Father and son meet once more. The joy of the present effaces the past. Joseph thinks of nothing but the exceeding delight of meeting. He does not say a word to his father about his brethren having sold him; he alludes not to his past history; he utters no complaint. them gradually towards him by a wise and well-considered process; and then directly they saw their sin, all was forgiven, all forgotten, and his task seemed to be to comfort them. There is not a shadow between him and the rest of his family: the reuniting of father and son causes no separation from the others. He goes to Pharaoh. and asks for leave to settle his brethren in the land of Goshen. They are to have the best of the land: they are to share in his prosperity. He tells Pharaoh nothing about his brothers' sin; he speaks not to Israel of the sufferings he has gone through.

### APPLICATION.

When I have been injured or overlooked, has my forgiveness been perfect and entire? Have I not sometimes spoken spitefully, alluded to past slights, told tales? Have I not tried to take advantage of my position in order to say something to the injury of those who have injured me, even though it may have been done long ago and repented of bitterly? And in family matters have I been careful to share fairly with others, and not use parental love to their disadvantage? There are many little points in which I have not attained to perfection in these matters, even if I cannot call to mind any gross act of injustice. I must also be careful to avoid any appearance of reproaching others for bygone deeds. It

is well to make a very strict rule on these subjects, and never to recur to past and repented faults.

#### AFFECTION.

Almighty God, full of love and affection to all who turn to Thee, I adore Thy goodness; and I pray Thee to give me part of Thy spirit of charity and forgiveness, that I may never reproach my brethren, and never mar the joy of my elders and superiors.

# RESOLUTION.

Never to complain, never to reproach, never to tell of injuries.

# THOUGHT.

'Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!'

# Redemption.

First Prelude. Picture: The Egyptians crowding to the granaries full of corn.

Second Prelude. Pray for gratitude.

#### Consideration.

Joseph's granaries were full; the stores of the Egyptians were empty. Their lives were of no value to them without bread. The forethought of Joseph now proves

their salvation. But are they to have it for nothing? First, their money goes to buy bread, then their cattle. then their land, then themselves. And when they are totally deprived of everything they have in the world. Joseph gives it them all back again, only demanding a fifth part as tribute, which fifth part was probably to be spent in public works for their own benefit. And is not this like the way of the true Joseph, the SAVIOUR of His people? He has laid up for us abundant stores, and what does He ask in return? A full, free, and perfect dedication of ourselves and all that we have, and when we have given ourselves up to Him in return for the inestimable blessings He has given us, He gives everything back to us again, only demanding the fifth part, for the number five, the number of His wounds, is the number of sacrifice, and the true worship of a Holy Sacrifice is all He asks from us.

# APPLICATION.

Have I taken the first step to obtain the Bread of Salvation? Have I offered my Saviour my money, my cattle, my lands? Have I dedicated to Him my children. myself? I know He will give me all back again, so perhaps I have never even taken the trouble to offer Him anything, but have expected to feed out of the granaries without any acknowledgment whatever. Or I may have received all back again, and yet grudge the small part He requires. I may have murmured at tithes or Church dues, or offertory collections, or subscriptions, or worst of all, have denied Him the worship due to Him in the Sacrifice of the Altar. Let me greet with joy and gratitude every opportunity of giving my fifth to Him; and may I hold all my earthly possessions only in trust for Him, saying, with all my heart, 'Thou hast saved my life.'

### AFFECTION.

O LORD, my SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST! Thou hast saved my life! I bless and praise Thee for Thy boundless generosity, and I pray Thee with all my heart to make me truly grateful, and anxious to share Thy bounties with others.

# RESOLUTION.

To hold everything I have in trust for CHRIST, glad when He claims a part of it.

# THOUGHT.

'How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O Goo!'

# Zacob's Aast Longing.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob receiving Joseph's oath.

Second Prelude. Pray for constancy.

#### CONSIDERATION.

The land of Egypt gave Jacob every comfort, luxury, honour, and consideration. He had no trouble, no responsibility; his son was virtually the ruler of the country, and all his kindred shared in his prosperity. But Israel's heart was in the land which God had blessed and given to him. He knew that God's best blessings

could only be received in GoD's own land. He foresaw, perchance, the attractions, the temptations towards idolatry which his descendants would experience. His heart yearned even in death for the country of his fathers, and by the removal of his corpse thither he intended to bind his sons more strongly to their former home. Egypt was but a temporary home, not an eternal resting-place. As his soul was to be 'gathered unto his people,' so his body was to rest amongst their bodies.

# APPLICATION.

Am I constant in my affections? Do I remember my father's home and long to be buried with my kindred? I may have a holy love and preference for my home, my parish, my country. It is a holy feeling when secondary to the love of God, and one which may serve as a ladder to many divine affections. It is not to be despised, and may serve as a safeguard against that affectation of a philosophical disregard for Christian burial, which breaks down holy reverence for the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and weakens belief in the Resurrection. And as, wherever I may be called, my heart should turn with love to its own land, so wherever I may dwell, my spirit should find its true home in the Land of Blessing where my Father dwells; and no luxury, no honours, no pleasures should chain me to the low flat country of ease and comfort.

#### AFFECTION.

O God of my life! I thank Thee that Thou hast given me a Land of Promise to which mine eyes may turn in death as well as in life; grant that my heart may be ever in the Home with Thee, and my longing ever be for my kindred—those who have departed this life in Thy faith and fear.

# RESOLUTION.

To pass through the world without getting absorbed in it, and particularly to avoid any occupation which is too engrossing.

# THOUGHT.

'Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.'

# Unexpected Blessings.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob in his old age receiving Joseph and his grandsons.

Second Prelude. Pray for gratitude.

# CONSIDERATION.

Jacob settled in Egypt, prosperous, all his sons in favour of the King, his son Joseph the chief ruler, the Prime Minister; his grandsons before him, his descendants numerous and likely to carry his name to the end of the world. He looks back to the days of his misery, when he was weeping for Joseph and longing to see his face, and he cries as he embraces his grandchildren, 'I had not thought to see thy face; and lo! God hath showed me also thy seed.' Happy the soul that acknowledges God's bounty; happy the soul that is aware of it, for blessings are heaped upon some and they will not thank God for them; and blessings are heaped upon others and they seem to be not even aware of them. How often, too, a soul mourns because it is denied the

blessing it craves, and in the end more is given than it could ever have hoped for.

#### APPLICATION.

Have I not, like Jacob, shed bitter tears because I could not have the blessing my soul longed for? have I not, like him, received tenfold in the end? The very circumstances I have most deplored have been the causes of my greatest happiness in later life. And if this has been the case in earthly things, how much more in spiritual things! Many a time have I mourned because I could not see the face of JESUS, and at last I have attained to a truer vision of Him, and not only have my own spiritual eyes been blest by the sight of Him, but I have seen His seed, I have rejoiced in the great company of the faithful, I have been brought not only to Him, but to the society of those who draw their being from Him, the Holy Catholic Church. desponding, I must expect blessings; instead of mourning after Joseph, I will look forward to seeing not only Himself but His devoted children.

#### AFFECTION.

My Saviour! I thank Thee for showing Thyself to me and for making me known to Thy children! I have pined for Thee, and I have longed for comfort; Thy love and the love of Thy Church is dearer to me than all other love; may I always be steadfast, and true, and grateful.

# RESOLUTION.

To cultivate joy and gratitude, particularly for such and such mercies.

#### THOUGHT.

'I have replenished every sorrowful soul.'

# Joseph's Filial Reverence.

First Prelude. Picture: Joseph prostrating himself before Jacob.

Second Prelude. Pray for reverence to age.

# CONSIDERATION.

Israel embraced his young grandsons. Joseph brought them out from between their grandfather's knees, and placed them in a reverent position to receive his blessing. He then prostrated himself, bowing himself with his face to the earth. The great Ruler of Egypt acknowledges what is due to his father; the son of the head of the tribe honours the priesthood of Jacob. That father, that priest of the family, was old and blind; he could not see the marks of honour given to him, but nevertheless Joseph rendered them carefully and willingly. In these days the blessing of the head of a family has no special patriarchal dignity, no special priestly significance; but it is a real blessing coming from God, and showing forth His Fatherhood, and should be valued as a great gift and one worthy of deep gratitude.

# APPLICATION.

How have I behaved to my parents? Have I sought the approbation of the world more than theirs? Have I undervalued their blessing? Have I been impatient with their infirmities? I have much to accuse myself of with regard not only to my parents but also to others who are aged and venerable; not only relations, but also those who are set over me—authorities spiritual and temporal. As Joseph gave reverence to his father, though the latter was blind and could not see him, so let me give all due honour to those who ought to have it, even though they be unaware of it—blind it may be, and even careless. I dishonour myself if I fail in this, much more than I can possibly dishonour them; but most of all I dishonour God, whose Fatherhood I ought to honour in all venerable and aged persons.

# AFFECTION.

O Blessed Saviour! Who hast said 'I honour My Father,' teach us so to honour our parents and elders that we may some day be meet to honour our God before His throne for ever.

RESOLUTION.

Always to behave respectfully to my elders.

THOUGHT.

Honour thy father and thy mother.'

# Ephraim and Manasseh.

Wirst Prelude. Picture: Israel with his hands on the Ephraim and Manasseh.

Second Prelude. Pray for acceptance in the sight of

# CONSIDERATION.

Isaac unwittingly and perforce blessed his younger son. Jacob wittingly and of set purpose blessed his younger grandson. Both were fulfilling the will of God. And the blessing was fulfilled. Ephraim became the ancestor of the royal tribe of the kingdom of Israel. Ephraim possessed the field of Shechem; Ephraim became the forefather of Joshua, Ephraim became the home of JESUS CHRIST during His dwelling in Nazareth. And why was Ephraim the younger thus distinguished above Manasseh the elder? Perhaps God saw in him the signs of a more devout and religious disposition; perhaps it was to show that GoD is not bound by the customs of mankind; perhaps it was to foreshadow the calling of the Gentiles instead of the Jews. God's ways are not our ways, and we can but bless His holy will and confide in His infinite wisdom.

### APPLICATION.

Am I not often surprised at GoD's choice? I honour Manasseh, but He honours Ephraim. I look at persons through the eyes of the world, I see them as society sees them, I hear their characters discussed by the set among whom I dwell, and I am but too much inclined to judge them with the judgment of the world. But the eldest in birth may be the youngest in faith, the greatest in station may be the smallest in good works, the highest in the world's wisdom may be the lowest in the things of GoD. And all these virtues may be hidden and known only to GoD, for man cannot see into the heart of man. Let me never judge who is most worthy, for this is only known to the Maker of all.

# AFFECTION.

O God and Father of us all! Thou hast in Thy great mercy called us to love and serve Thee; may I never contend for the highest place, but try to do my best and leave all else to Thee, knowing that whether I, and those I love, have the right or the left hand on our heads, we have infinitely more than we deserve.

# RESOLUTION.

To accept Gon's decrees with a thankful heart.

# THOUGHT.

'The last shall be first, and the first last.'

# The Blessing of the Brethren.

First Prelude. Picture: The Twelve standing before their Father.

Second Prelude. Pray for grace to lay a good foundation.

### CONSIDERATION.

The dying Patriarch speaks the last words to his sons. Obedient and disobedient, cruel and merciful, reverent and profane, they are all gathered before him. The eldest nearest to him, and all approaching one by one according to age. What anxiety, what jealousy, what heartburnings, and yet what reverent awe on the part of

his sons, as one by one the aged hand is laid on the head of each, and the words spoken which reveal past sins and future destinies; the eldest, deprived of the birthright for sins committed long ago; the second and third, reminded of past cruelty; Judah blessed and praised—he who offered himself as a ransom for his brethren made the ancestor of Him Who paid the ransom for His brethren; Joseph singled out for a double blessing, and made the ancestor of two tribes; whilst Benjamin, the gentle child, was to become the successful warrior. Each received exactly the measure he had deserved, the blessing he had earned by his own conduct.

#### APPLICATION.

As in worldly things so in spiritual things, we reap what we have sown. My Heavenly Father will one day give me my place. Where will it be? On the left hand or on the right? Amongst the sheep or the goats? Whichever it be, it will be according to my deserts.

Do I not find even now how vain it is to blame circumstances for my faults, mistakes, and misfortunes? I owe them entirely to my own former want of discipline, my wanton tongue, my heartless action, my cruel taunt. These have come back to me years and years afterwards, constantly reminding me how different things might have been had I exercised more self-control, and shown more humility.

#### AFFECTION.

O Heavenly Father, I love Thee; visit not upon me my past sins, place me with Judah and Joseph, not with Reuben and Simeon; for though I have sinned, I repent, and I grieve that I have ever offended Thee.

# RESOLUTION.

To walk warily, remembering my latter end.

# THOUGHT.

'What a man sows that shall he also reap.'

# The Blessing of Judah.

First Prelude. Picture: JESUS CHRIST entering Jerusalem.

Second Prelude. Pray for grace to see Christ in the Old Testament.

### CONSIDERATION.

The blessing of Judah reached far beyond himself. It is full of Jesus Christ, Who was descended from Judah by His earthly descent. The sceptre had only just departed from Judah when the King of Peace arrived. The gathering of the people began then, and has been going on ever since. The ass's colt and the choice vine were bound together when the True Vine made His entry on the foal which symbolised the growing Church; the bloody sweat of Gethsemane was richer than the blood of grapes. The eyes of the Lord were red with the blood of His sufferings, though His teeth were white with the milk of sweet doctrine and the law of loving-kindness; and the Conqueror of all the powers of evil shows Himself to us in most pathetic Majesty.

#### APPLICATION.

Jacob foresaw this so many hundred years ago, and can I not see it now? Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and does it not awaken any feeling of gratitude and joy in me? Jacob looked forward, and I look back; but our gaze centres in the Saviour of the world. The blessing of Judah extends to the whole world, the True Vine spreads His branches over the Universe. I wonder that the blessing is not more valued by others, but do I behave as if I valued Him as my chiefest treasure? Do I delight in tracing Him in the Law and the Prophets? Do I look forward to seeing Him take possession of His kingdom? If not, what is it which comes between Him and me?

# AFFECTION.

O Blessed Saviour, long-expected Messiah, grant me grace to meditate upon Thee with a more thankful heart. Grant that I may see Thee in the past, and live in Thee in the present, and look forward to being with Thee for ever in the future.

### RESOLUTION.

To look for Christ everywhere in Holy Scripture.

### THOUGHT.

'In Whom we have redemption through His blood.'

# The Cave of Machpelah.

First Prelude. Picture: Jacob's funeral procession. Second Prelude. Pray for deadness to the world.

# CONSIDERATION.

Jacob had a royal funeral, for the mourning for an Egyptian King lasted seventy days. This mourning was made for him before his body was taken away from the land of Egypt. And when the great procession reached the land of Canaan, another mourning of seven days was made for him, a mourning so great and so full of lamentations that the place between Jordan and Jericho was named after it—'the mourning of the Egyptians.' The whole of that land had been promised by God to Abraham and his descendants, and how much had they now in possession? Only a grave, the grave of their ancestors: they laid down Jacob in the same place with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah and Leah. And then the long procession wended its way back to Egypt; strangers and pilgrims, destined to live under a foreign yoke; and yet lords of Palestine, and ancestors of the Kingdom of CHRIST.

# APPLICATION.

A glorious future has been promised to me, and yet sometimes I am tempted to think there is nothing for me but a grave. Behind me, I see the graves of my ancestors;

around me, I see the graves of my kindred; before me I see my own grave. And yet I am a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven; and how have I become so? Through a grave. The grave and gate of death. I am buried with Christ in Baptism. My part in the Promised Land at present is a grave. What a call to a mortified life! What a call to complete mastery over my corrupt will! This land of graves will some day be a land of delight! This path of mortification will some day be a royal road of triumph! But it must be in God's own good time, after long service, after hard fighting, after much lamentation and mourning and woe! The end, however, is sure and certain, and why should my heart fail me?

#### AFFECTION.

Preserve me, LORD JESUS, through the ways of this troublesome world, and grant that I may never be discouraged by the signs and the tokens of death, but know and feel that they must precede the joy of life and immortality, and that if I am truly buried with Thee I shall rise with Thee.

#### RESOLUTION.

To look beyond the grave; from Machpelah to Sion.

# THOUGHT.

'O grave! where is thy victory?

# The Body of Boseph.

First Prelude. Picture: The ark or chest containing the body of Joseph.

Second Prelude. Pray to be kept faithful to Christ.

# CONSIDERATION.

The last action recorded of Joseph is a full, free, and entire forgiveness of his brethren. The fear of the consequences of this sin still pressed upon their minds: they sent a messenger first to beg for further assurance of forgiveness, they then came themselves. There was no Joseph had forgiven them long ago. necessity. last words testify to his love for his nation; he had not become Egyptian in spirit, he looked forward to the Promise, and he wished his brethren to look forward too. His body was to be embalmed and carefully guarded until the time of the Exodus. It was to be a perpetual witness to them that they were only pilgrims and strangers. The care of it would remind them constantly that they had nothing to do with the idolatry of the Egyptians. was only a dead body—the spirit had departed; but it was a holy and a sacred trust, and a sign that they were a separate people and set apart for a sacred future.

### APPLICATION.

The Hebrews had the dead body of Joseph. I have the living Body of Christ. They had to keep watch and ward, they had to embalm and to enshrine the remains of their chief. He could do them no good; he could give them no help in their journey, and yet they were to bear him with them—the image and type of a greater thing to come. I have no mere sign, no mere embalmed body to keep me separate, and to be a witness against the idolatry of the people of the land; but I have the Body and the Blood, the Soul and the Divinity of the living Christ, not only to lead and guide me on my way, but to feed me with a heavenly and spiritual food after a heavenly and spiritual manner. Do I realise the wonderful privileges sent me; do I make my journey to the Promised Land a holy journey, full of reverence and awe, because I know my Living Chief is with me?

# AFFECTION.

My LORD, I worship Thee and praise Thee for Thine infinite love in giving me Thyself to help me on my way. Grant that I may value the wonderful privileges Thou hast given; grant that I may feel that no journey undertaken without Thee can ever bring a blessing.

### RESOLUTION.

To take no step without the LORD.

#### THOUGHT.

'The Body of Our LORD JESUS CHRIST which was given for Thee.'

LONDON: PRINTED BY

SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE

AND PARLIAMENT STREET

. 







